

Program Review

**An Evaluation of the
Investment Agriculture Foundation
Local Government Agricultural Planning
Program**

FINAL REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since 1999 the Investment Agriculture Foundation of British Columbia (IAF) has funded the *Local Government Agricultural Planning* (LGAP) program to support projects that will lead to the development of agricultural plans within municipalities and regional districts. As of May 2010, this funding program has led to the development of 27 agricultural plans and strategies in the Province. An evaluation of the LGAP program was completed between May and December, 2010. This report presents the final result of this evaluation. The aim of the evaluation is to contribute to knowledge of what projects have been able to deliver the most significant value and which ones encountered problems. The broad objective is to use the findings of the evaluation to improve the development of future agricultural planning in order to strengthen municipal planning processes, protect the importance of agriculture, and promote its viability.

Evaluation design

The project involved both formative and summative evaluations. The formative evaluation aimed to improve the funding program by examining the method of its delivery and the quality of its implementation. The summative evaluation examined the effects or outcomes of the funding program by describing what happened subsequent to developing the agricultural plan, assessing the extent to which the funding could be said to have contributed to the outcomes, and determining the overall impact of the funding beyond the immediate target of creating an agriculture plan.

The analysis focussed on 16 completed agricultural plans. In-person interviews, along with follow-up telephone and email exchanges, were completed with 34 people covering twelve of the completed plans. Telephone interviews were completed with seven key informants who were in a position to influence the development and delivery of the LGAP program. Data were collected about the effectiveness of the planning efforts with respect to the applicants' objectives and the efficacy of the LGAP program with respect to IAF's intended outcomes.

Key findings

Outcomes of funded projects

The following points summarise the key outcomes of the completed plans.

- 27 projects were funded, of which 16 have been completed and 11 are under development.
- All of the 16 completed agricultural plans were received by local governments via formal resolutions. Seven of the plans have led to changes in land use policies that guide local government decisions. Six of the completed plans have been formally adopted as a sub-area Agricultural Area Plan, with one under review for adoption.

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- A relationship exists between stated goals and project outcomes. When the stated goal of the plan was to have it adopted as part of the OCP in five of six cases the goal was achieved. In contrast, when there is no mention of having plans adopted as secondary plans then the plan is most likely to be only ‘received’ by local governments.
- The general scope of the completed plans was similar. All but one plan provided a vision statement for agriculture in the area. Every plan focussed on both land use issues and economic development, although to differing degrees.
- The contents of the completed plans were assessed using a set of key considerations as a guide: legislative context; background; objectives and goals (and vision); plan policies; and mapping. The results show a range of levels of detail. Most of the plans lacked detail in more than one content area. Based on this set of considerations, the City of Richmond and the District of Lake Country were the most complete plans.
- Positively influencing agricultural land use policy decisions was mentioned frequently by interviewees.
- Many key informants provided clear statements about the benefits of agricultural plans to improve consistency between provincial policy and legislation and local government policies.
- Most completed plans provide sufficient details about the legislative context to provide a “thread” that helps to integrate policies across jurisdictions.
- The planning process itself was identified as positively influencing the level of awareness and opinions of agriculture. The process was also identified as helping to bring groups together, open dialogue, and improve understanding of agricultural issues among non-farmers.
- Overall, there is a strong sense that the completed plans had a positive influence over a range of outcomes, but this influence may have been more indirect than direct. The agricultural land base, agricultural operations, and political context mean that plans have been developed for different reasons, with different starting points, and with different goals and objectives. Furthermore, the breadth and influence of external factors on the agricultural sector (e.g., non-agricultural priorities, such as urban development and economic growth) means that it is not possible to directly associate outcomes of the agricultural planning processes with broader provincial and community priorities. In particular, identifying direct economic benefits to local farms and the agricultural areas was very elusive. Benefits of agricultural plans for reducing urban/rural conflict were noted, however, the benefits were not always direct or apparent.

Efficacy

The LGAP program has a good sense of the program’s intended outcomes, but the communication of these outcomes can be improved. The aim is to provide local agricultural planning solutions, with a focus on land use policies and regulations, that improve the viability of farming in the area. These points are expressed clearly in IAF’s promotional materials for the LGAP program. The eligible activities are consistent with these intended outcomes. Overall, the information provides good direction to potential applicants. There are, however, two concerns that introduce ambiguity.

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- Inconsistent use of the terms ‘agricultural plans’ and ‘agricultural area plans’ by IAF (and among completed plans) contributes to confusion about intended project outcomes with implications for the future development and delivery of the LGAP program, as noted in the recommendations.
- The stated expectation that AAPs be “formally adopted” by local governments is unclear. The term ‘adopted’ can be and is used differently by different governments. This can create confusion about what is an expected outcome of the LGAP program.

These two areas of ambiguity are contributing to confusion about the intended outcomes and appropriate scope of agricultural planning processes.

Effectiveness

In the context of the LGAP’s intention to support agricultural planning as a means to find solutions that improve the viability of farming in the area, it is clear that the funding program is effective. There is a high level of satisfaction regarding the plans created by the planning processes, the benefits of having these plans, and of the funding provided by IAF through the LGAP program. In particular, many people interviewed noted the critical importance of the program funding as essential to getting the planning efforts off the ground and gaining buy-in from local governments. Some concerns about the LGAP were expressed by applicants. These concerns centred on a perceived lack of on-going support and expertise once the planning efforts began. Concerns were also expressed about the lack of follow-up to help implement the plans (many applicants were not aware of possible funding). However, relative to the positive outcomes of the projects these concerns were less significant.

Providing more information to applicants about agricultural planning, and about Agricultural Area Plans in particular, will help improve the program’s effectiveness. There are excellent resources available but they do not appear to be used well. Among these resources Smith’s *Planning for Agriculture: Resource Materials* is essential reading. There are opportunities for IAF to work with the Ministry of Agriculture, the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC), and other agencies to improve the breadth of resources available to support agricultural planning.

Recommendations

Agricultural planning in BC has moved through two phases. The first focussed on land preservation and the second on agricultural land use planning – making sure agriculture was recognised as the highest and best use of agricultural land. Throughout this second phase IAF’s *Local Government Agricultural Planning* funding program has been instrumental. Now, after supporting agricultural land use planning for more than ten years, IAF has an opportunity to improve how it delivers the LGAP program.

The aim of this project was to evaluate what has been accomplished by and as a result of the funding program. The broad objective was to improve the development of future agricultural plans in order to strengthen municipal planning processes and protect the importance of agriculture to communities. Based on the program evaluation, the

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researchers have only one area of concern: the lack of clarity about the expected outcomes of the LGAP program. By addressing this concern, the researchers believe that IAF can improve the LGAP funding program and, in turn, improve the development of future agricultural plans in order to strengthen municipal planning processes and protect the importance of agriculture to communities. We believe that the concern about the lack of clarity about the expected outcomes of the LGAP program can be addressed through the following recommendations. We also provide suggestions for further consideration.

1.0 Clarify the expected outcomes of the LGAP program

- 1.1 Determine whether the current statement about the program's overarching expected outcome is consistent with the priorities of the LGAP program;
- 1.2 Clearly distinguish between an agricultural plan as a general undertaking and an Agricultural Area Plan as a formal policy tool used by local governments. Use these terms more precisely and consistently in all of IAF information materials about agricultural planning.
 - 1.2.1 Provide information about the purpose of an AAP.
 - 1.2.2 Clarify use of the term 'strategy' (versus plan and AAP).
- 1.3 Clarify what it means to 'formally adopt' (versus receive, accept, endorse, etc).
- 1.4 Revise IAF promotional materials to reflect changes.

2.0 Develop funding options based on the expected outcomes of agricultural planning processes.

- 2.1 Align expected project outcomes with different stages, and associated activities that are eligible for funding, of the planning process.

Other suggestions

The following points are presented as suggestions for IAF's consideration.

Develop additional requirements for LGAP funding eligibility.

- Require an AAC to be in place and operating before applying for funding. The LGAP pamphlet presently states [emphasis added], "IAF *expects* applicants to have a steering committee (Agricultural Advisory Committee) in place at the time of application." Perhaps clearer language is required if having an AAC in place is already a requirement.
- Require land use inventories be included in or completed as part of the planning process (not just listed as an eligible activity). These inventories provide essential information for creating effective plans.
- Require applicants to state whether or not the goal is to recommend revisions to or adoption of agricultural land use policies. If this goal is not known at the time of application then the applicants could state when in the planning process the decision to include this goal or not will be made. This requirement is suggested as a means to encourage applicants to have clear goals and objectives. This

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requirement is not intended as a criterion of evaluation; IAF can be neutral with regard to these specific goals of the applicant, but can require applicants to have clear goals and objectives.

- If the goal is to have land use policies revised or formally adopted then IAF should require applicants to make a decision as to whether an AAP is appropriate or not for their agricultural area. If this decision is not known at the time of the application then the applicants could state when in the planning process the decision will be made. This requirement, like the previous, is suggested as a means to encourage applicants to have clear goals and objectives. This requirement is not intended as a criterion of evaluation; IAF can be neutral with regard to these specific goals of the applicant, but can require applicants to have clear goals and objectives.
- Restrict recommendations for agricultural land use policies (but not agricultural plans) to issues within the legislative control of local governments.

Provide a resource kit about agricultural planning to applicants.

- Develop a set of ‘best of’ agricultural planning practices and outcomes based on the successes of the LGAP program.
- Encourage the Ministry of Agriculture and the Agricultural Land Commission to improve resources to support agricultural planning, such as:
 - Update Smith’s (1998) *Planning for Agriculture: Resource Materials* to reflect current legislation.
 - Encourage the Ministry of Agriculture and the Agricultural Land Commission to deliver more professional development workshops to agrologists and local government planners on agricultural planning.
- As resources permit, provide more mentoring and advice throughout the planning process. (This may be provided better by the Ministry of Agriculture or the ALC.)

Encourage the updating of agricultural plans and AAPs to keep plans current (e.g., every five years).

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Disclaimer:

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the B.C. Ministry of Agriculture are pleased to participate in the production of this evaluation. We are committed to working with our industry partners to address issues of importance to the agriculture and agri-food industry in British Columbia. Opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Investment Agriculture Foundation, the B.C. Ministry of Agriculture or Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

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INTRODUCTION

Effective planning is critical to the viability of farming¹ in British Columbia. The combination of a limited land base suitable for agriculture and persistent pressure on this land for non-agricultural uses heightens the competition among land uses and the potential for conflict. The primary benefits of agricultural planning are to reduce urban/rural conflict, improve local economic activity from farming, establish consistency with provincial policy and legislation, and help build sustainable communities with balanced economic diversity. Importantly, the Province recognised the need for agricultural planning in the early 1970s, culminating in 1973 in the Agricultural Land Commission Act and the Agricultural Land Reserve. The purpose of this planning policy was to legally protect agricultural land and its use for agricultural production. This policy set direction from the Province to local governments for agricultural land use planning.

The first twenty years of agricultural planning in BC focussed on the preservation of agricultural lands. In the mid-1990s, the Provincial Government initiated what can be described as the second phase of agricultural planning. "After twenty years it's no longer a question of whether we should have an Agricultural Land Reserve - the issue now is how to make it better."² The ensuing amendments to the ALC Act and the enactment of the *Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act*, with corresponding changes to the *Local Government Act*, effectively shifted the planning focus from land preservation to land use. Moving forward, the guiding principle was that agriculture was the highest and best use of agricultural land. The operating principle is that agricultural planning must be carried out as a partnership between provincial and local governments and farmers "working towards a shared vision of how best to protect farming's working land base, resolving competing land use demands and resource priorities, and ensuring that agriculture can be sustained and enhanced in the future."³ The Agricultural Land Commission's resource, *Planning for Agriculture*⁴, provides a comprehensive account of what the province wanted to achieve and how to achieve it.

Since 1999 the Investment Agriculture Foundation of British Columbia (IAF) has supported agricultural planning by local governments through the *Local Government Agricultural Planning* (LGAP) program.⁵ The purpose of this program is to "support projects that will lead to development of agricultural area plans within municipalities and regional districts."⁶ Applications for funding must be submitted by a municipality or

¹ "Farming" and "farmer" is used as a general term that encompasses references to all forms of primary agricultural producers and production, including orchardists, ranchers, growers, horticulturalists, etc.

² Premier Mike Harcourt, cited in Smith (1998), *Planning for Agriculture*, p. 2-2.

³ Smith (1998). *Planning for Agriculture*, p. 4-2.

⁴ Smith (1998). *Planning for Agriculture*.

⁵ The Ministry of Agriculture supplied funding of up to \$10,000 per local government and up to \$30,000 for a period of time (about 1996 – 2006) (Bert van Daltsen, personal communication).

⁶ IAF website: http://www.iafbc.ca/funding_available/programs/local-govt-ag-planning/ag_planning.htm. IAF provides funds up to 50 per cent of the cash costs of a project, up to a maximum of \$45,000.

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regional district or an alliance between a local/regional government and an agriculture organisation. To date IAF has funded the development of 27 agricultural plans.

As the demand for agricultural planning grows, it is important to know how the LGAP funding program can provide the best support. To this end, IAF decided to evaluate the outcomes to date of the LGAP program. By evaluating these past efforts IAF can learn about what projects have been able to deliver the most significant value and which ones encountered problems. The aim of the evaluation project was to evaluate what has been accomplished by and as a result of the funding program. The broad objective of evaluating the LGAP funding program is to improve the development of future agricultural plans in order to strengthen municipal planning processes and protect the importance of agriculture to communities. This report presents the results of the LGAP program's evaluation, including recommendations for improving the program.

The project assessed both what was intended (efficacy) and what was achieved (effectiveness) by the LGAP program. The evaluation included a comprehensive review of completed agricultural plans, interviews with people directly involved with the development of local agricultural plans, and interviews with people involved with the founding and shaping of the LGAP program. Each of the funded projects was assessed against the expected outcome of the LGAP program, specifically, "The overarching expected outcome of an Agricultural Area Plan is that it be formally adopted and used to guide implementation activities."⁷ The authors of this report took this statement to mean that the desired outcome of agricultural planning efforts funded by the LGAP program was to integrate agricultural interests with formal land use policies, with the specific aim to use the formal adoption of Agricultural Area Plans as part of local government Official Community Plans as the means to this end.

Overall, the LGAP program has been very successful. Every funded project resulted in a completed agricultural plan (or is on its way to doing so). These plans, to varying degrees, have had a positive influence on municipal planning processes and land use policies. Most importantly, six of sixteen completed agricultural plans have been adopted as planning bylaws, with one on its way.

While the outcomes of the funded projects are positive, there remain questions about the extent to which outcomes satisfy the overarching aim of the LGAP program to formally adopt Agricultural Area Plans. It may not be clear to applicants what constitutes an "Agricultural Area Plan" or what it means for a plan to be "formally adopted." This lack of clarity obscures the expected outcomes of the LGAP program and makes it more difficult to assess the agricultural plans against the intended outcomes of the LGAP program. This lack of clarity does not diminish the quality of the completed plans or their impacts. However, clarifying the desired outcomes of the LGAP program can make a positive contribution to how the LGAP program is delivered in the future, with particular regard to the direction the funding program can provide to applicants.

The evaluation of the LGAP program focussed on the direct outcomes of the agricultural planning projects that received funding from IAF. The breadth of factors influencing the viability of farming in any particular jurisdiction is excessively complicated and unique to each agricultural planning area. Therefore, it was beyond the scope of this evaluation to assess the direct contributions of the agricultural planning processes and the

⁷ IAF brochure, *Helping Communities Plan for an Agricultural Future*. Available on-line: http://www.iafbc.ca/funding_available/programs/documents/ag-plans-brochure.pdf

completed plans to the viability of farming operations in specific locations. Notwithstanding this limitation, the results of the evaluation suggest that the LGAP program has helped to articulate the public interests in agricultural planning, to recognise these interests as important elements of municipal planning decisions, and to ensure that local government and provincial government policies are integrated. Looking ahead, there remain opportunities to move beyond recognition of agricultural interests in planning processes to formally embed these interests in local government land use policies. If the first twenty years of agricultural planning served to secure land preservation, and the past fifteen years have served to embed agriculture in local government land use planning processes, then the opportunity now is to make agricultural planning better.

BACKGROUND

The purpose of agricultural planning

The aims and objectives of agricultural planning are best understood in the context of planning in the public domain. In its most general sense of the term, planning is a future-oriented activity focussed on desired goals and objectives. This general sense of planning has a special quality when applied to the public domain, that is, when planning is done by governments on behalf of the public. Essential to local governmental planning is to make the future public interest a visible part of public decision-making processes.⁸ But what is in the best interest of the public is not always clear and evident, hence the need for planning. Furthermore, our political, economic, legal, and social interests all cross jurisdictions, from the local to the global. It is only in these complicated layers of planning in the public domain that we can appreciate the challenge of first identifying agricultural interests through planning processes and then formally adopting these interests through agricultural land use policies.

Notwithstanding the challenges of multiple and sometimes competing interests, the aim of agricultural planning is to integrate agricultural interests across jurisdictions through planning processes. To make the future of agriculture a visible part of a municipality's land use policies several qualities must be recognised and practiced:

- Give voice to the agriculture community in municipal planning processes;
- Secure a place for agriculture in the future growth of the municipality;
- Provide sufficient direction to address agricultural issues and concerns;
- Balance the needs of both urban and farming communities;
- Address increasing urban development pressures, especially where agricultural land may be attractive for a use other than agricultural production;
- Support the future profitability of agriculture; and,
- Provide a framework for on-going agricultural-related decision making at the local government level.

⁸ Connell, David J. (2009). "Planning and Its Orientation to the Future" *International Planning Studies* 14(1):85-98.

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The potential benefit of agricultural planning is to bring local governments and the agricultural community together to articulate a shared vision for the future of agriculture and the policies necessary to achieve this vision.

Regulatory framework

In BC there are a number of important programs and supporting regulations that guide agricultural planning. Of particular importance, the Province of BC's *Strengthening Farming* program helps to plan for agricultural land use and farm management issues. The *Strengthening Farming* program is jointly implemented with the Agricultural Land Commission in co-operation with local governments and the farming community. As a framework for agricultural planning the program helps to integrate local and provincial interests. The program is supported by several pieces of legislation, including the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*, the *Local Government Act*, the *Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act*, and the *Land Title Act*. These complementary acts of legislation help to protect and promote agricultural uses of land and to protect and promote normal farm activities on agricultural lands. Collectively, the aim of the legislative framework is to ensure consistency between local bylaws (including plans) and the objectives of the ALC Act, regulations, and orders of the Commission.

Agricultural Land Commission Act

The *Agricultural Land Commission Act*, initially enacted in 1973 with major amendments in 2002, established the Agricultural Land Reserve as a special designation to protect land in British Columbia with agricultural potential. The Act plays a critical role in land use policies, taking precedence over other legislation, including the *Local Government Act* and land use bylaws of local governments. The Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) makes the final decision related to land uses not in accordance with the provisions of the Act. The *Agricultural Land Reserve Use, Subdivision and Procedure Regulation* identifies agriculture as the priority use of ALR land and specifies permitted farm activities and non-farm uses of ALR lands. The regulations of the ALC Act also define the procedures for removing land from the ALR. ALR land is subject to provincial regulation whether it is owned privately or by the Crown. Effectively, the ALC Act is an influential policy that ties provincial interests to local government land use planning and bylaw functions.

Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act

As urban development encroaches on agricultural areas and as the number of non-farm uses of farm lands increases, it is inevitable that land use conflicts will arise. To minimise these potential conflicts the *Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act* focusses on the relation between farming and non-farming neighbours. The Act affirms the right of farmers to carry out their activities without the threat of unwarranted nuisance complaints about dust, odour, and noise that are typically the source of conflicts. The Act protects farming activities that take place in the ALR and on land zoned for farm use, and comply with other legislative acts (*Environmental Management Act*, *Integrated Pest Management Act*, and *Public Health Act*) or any land use regulation. In this regard, the

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policies and guidelines of the Act affect local agricultural planning by linking the “right to farm” with the authority of local governments to establish and enforce land use bylaws. The overall aim of linking farm practices with local land use policies is to balance the rights of farmers with the rights of nearby residents who have legitimate concerns about farm practices.

The protection provided by the Act is not automatic. The Act only protects farmers that are using normal farm practices; it does not protect poor farming practices or eliminate nuisance lawsuits and nuisance bylaws of local governments. According to the Act, “normal farm practice” means a practice that is conducted by a farm business in a manner consistent with (a) proper and accepted customs and standards as established and followed by similar farm businesses under similar circumstances...and includes a practice that makes use of innovative technology in a manner consistent with proper advanced farm management practices and with any standards...”. Whenever complaints do arise, the Act provides a process to find solutions that let farmers farm, keep people out of court, and deal fairly with people's concerns. A farmer not using normal farm practices can be ordered by the Farm Industry Review Board to stop or modify unacceptable farm practices. Complaints about farm practices can be resolved either informally or formally through the review board.

Local Government Act

The *Local Government Act* provides the legal framework for local governments to represent the interests of its constituents. The Act sets out the powers, duties, and functions necessary for local governments to carry out its responsibilities, including the authority to regulate the use and development of land. The BC Ministry of Agriculture clearly identifies parts of the *Local Government Act* that are relevant to agricultural planning, including the following⁹:

- policy statements in community plans to include policies respecting the maintenance and enhancement of farming on land in a farming area or in an area designated for agricultural use in a community plan (S. 878(1)(c));
- adoption procedures require that official community plans applied to land in the Agricultural Land Reserve must be referred to the Agricultural Land Commission for comment prior to adoption (S. 882(3)(c));
- development permit areas for the protection of farming (S. 919.1(1)(c)). This provision may include requirements for screening, landscaping, fencing and siting of buildings or structures, in order to provide buffering or separation of development from farming on adjoining or adjacent land (S. 920(10));
- use of land for agricultural operations (Div. 8, S. 915 to 919): The Minister of Agriculture is responsible for this division of the Act which:
 - requires the approval of the minister responsible for the *Farm Practices Protection Act* for zoning bylaws of local governments that would prohibit or restrict the farm use of land in farming areas. Farming areas are defined as land within the ALR or under an aquaculture license. (S. 915)
 - allows the minister to establish agricultural standards for the guidance of local governments in the preparation of the various bylaws affecting agriculture (S. 916);

⁹ BC Ministry of Agriculture. http://www.agf.gov.bc.ca/resmgmt/sf/keylegisl.htm#Local_Govt_Act

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- allows for the creation of "farm bylaws" that will give more flexibility in specific planning standards for agricultural operations (S. 917); and,
- enables the implementation of a process to review zoning bylaws to meet the minister's standards or modified in a manner agreed to by the minister (S. 919).

These provisions under the *Local Government Act* provide greater certainty for both farmers and non-farmers about permitted uses of land.

Among its powers, duties, and functions, local governments may complete Official Community Plans (OCP) and Regional Growth Strategies. An OCP provides the vision for a local jurisdiction, thereby making the future interests of the local government a visible part of its decision making process. An OCP is a comprehensive statement of objectives and policies that guide decisions on planning and land use management, including agricultural planning. Section 875 of the *Local Government Act* sets out the responsibilities and obligations of municipalities and regional districts for Official Community Plans. A Regional Growth Strategy (Part 25 of the Act) "is a regional vision that commits affected municipalities and regional districts to a course of action to meet common social, economic and environmental objectives. It is initiated and adopted by a regional district and referred to all affected local governments for acceptance." An underlying premise of a RGS is that growth is shaped not only by political boundaries but also by geographical boundaries. Therefore, a mechanism is required to effectively manage growth across jurisdictions. The RGS legislation provides a framework to coordinate planning on issues that cross boundaries among municipalities and regional districts, the provincial government, and other agencies. An effective growth strategy will set in place broad regional land use objectives.

The *ALR and Community Planning Guidelines*, published by the Agriculture Land Commission, "are written for local governments that are preparing official plans under the *Local Government Act*, that involve ALR land." This document outlines essential aspects of agricultural land use policies including roles and responsibilities of local governments, permitted uses, minimum parcel sizes, and development permit areas.

Agricultural Area Plans

For the purpose of this evaluation project, the researchers have distinguished between agricultural plans and Agricultural Area Plans (AAPs). The former refers to the general planning process concerning agriculture. The scope and contents of an agricultural plan can be very broad, covering all aspects of agriculture, from a shared vision to economic development, healthy communities, food security, land uses, and on-farm activities. An AAP, on the other hand, is a local government policy tool for agricultural land use planning that is intended to be formally adopted as a sub-area plan of an Official Community Plan. The Agriculture Land Commission, in *Planning for Agriculture*¹⁰, provides the most comprehensive discussion of AAPs. The following information draws from this document.

The *Local Government Act* makes provision for municipalities and regional districts to develop official plans. As a matter of practice¹¹, local governments have also

¹⁰ Smith (1998). *Planning for Agriculture*, Chapter 7.

¹¹ There are no provisions in the *Local Government Act* that explicitly address sub-area plans. It is in this sense that they are best described as a matter of practice rather than legislation.

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developed sub-area plans that provide a greater level of detail for addressing objectives not sufficiently covered in an OCP. These sub-area plans are often referred to as neighbourhood or local area plans. When applied to agricultural lands they are referred to as Agricultural Area Plans. An AAP must be approved by the same process as an OCP and, when adopted, attains the same legal status as an OCP.

The primary benefits of an AAP are that it provides a level of policy detail that is greater than the OCP and specific to an area's agricultural features. The key points can be summarised as follows¹²:

- An AAP is a sub-area plan applied to a farm area(s) that will be predominantly, but not necessarily exclusively, in agricultural use; will be geographically smaller than the full jurisdictional area of either a municipality or regional district; and may involve two or more jurisdictions;
- The general legislative status of an AAP and means of adoption is similar to an OCP as prescribed in the *Local Government Act* although there is a need for policy consistency with an adopted OCP;
- The primary purposes of an AAP are to express agricultural policy at a level of detail that can effectively deal with issues important to the farm community, enhance the potential for land use and resource compatibility and clearly define agriculture's place in the larger community;
- An AAP is intended to achieve:
 - an enhanced understanding of agriculture as a basis for determining issues important to the farm community and establishing solution-oriented policies;
 - greater focus on the farmland base and agricultural issues;
 - inclusive planning processes where members of the agricultural community are full partners in the plan's development; and,
 - improved local and Provincial (and Federal as appropriate) policy integration.

In *Planning for Agriculture*, Smith argues strongly that planning for agriculture through the use of a sub-area Agricultural Area Plan has the greatest potential to ensure a sufficient level of detail, provide the context within which to judge competing land use activities in farm areas, and to avoid agriculture being overwhelmed by urban planning issues.

Although actual AAPs will vary from area to area, it is reasonable to identify a set of key considerations when developing a plan's contents.¹³ These considerations were used as the basis for evaluating the contents of the completed agricultural plans. These considerations are summarised as follows.

- Legislative backdrop
The legislative context of an AAP should be clearly stated. This includes a statement in relation to a regional growth strategy and a statement in relation to an OCP. "In doing so, a thread of consistency can be drawn from the regional growth strategy to the OCP and onto the sub-area AAP. This will 'force' consideration of the linkages between the broad based OCP and the

¹² Smith (1998). *Planning for Agriculture*, p.

¹³ Smith (1998), *Planning for Agriculture*, pp. 7-29 to 7-34.

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more area specific AAP and will ensure that the AAP is developed in the context of broader community and regional objectives instead of in isolation.” The legislative backdrop should also include explicit reference to the *Local Government Act* and the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*.

- **Background**
A background report is usually completed as part of an agricultural planning process. Not all of this information should be included in an AAP. It is more appropriate to include a summary of this background report in the AAP. This might include an historical overview, a general description of the physical area, the state of agriculture, and a summary of key issues.
- **Goals and objectives**
The goals and objectives of the agricultural community, including an expression of a vision for agriculture, provide a sense of the breadth and depth of the plan. These goals and objectives should be focussed on agriculture but also document relations with other land uses and local priorities.
- **Plan policies**
The plan should provide clear policy direction to the local government. This direction can be in the form of policy statements or recommendations to change or develop policy. The policy statements should be directly related to issues and opportunities that were identified in the plan. Possible plan policies include: land use designations and policy, environmental considerations, economic policies, transportation, development permit areas, farm bylaws, agricultural impact assessments, and references to other jurisdictional issues and policies.
- **Mapping**
A large number of maps are not required. Many of these will be in background studies. Maps of the agricultural area of the plan must be included. Other maps as required to illustrate specific issues or policies might also be included, such as: land status and tenure; current land uses; floodplains; key resources; development permit areas; transportation networks, and future study areas.

Land Title Act

The general purpose of the *Land Title Act* is to govern BC's land title system, which is the system of tracking registered owners of land, which in turn provides confidence and security for orderly disposition of land (i.e., buying and selling) or otherwise dealing with legal title to land. Among other things, the Act includes legislation for approving new residential subdivisions, and it is this part of the Act that pertains to agricultural planning. Specifically, the Act has the following provisions that provide approving officers the power to assess impacts of new subdivisions on farmland.

- 86(1) Without limiting section 85(3), in considering an application for subdivision approval, the approving officer may
- (c) refuse to approve the subdivision plan, if the approving officer considers that (x) the anticipated development of the subdivision would unreasonably interfere with farming operations on adjoining or reasonably adjacent properties, due to inadequate buffering or separation of the development from the farm, or (xi) despite subparagraph (ix), the extent or

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location of highways and highway allowances shown on the plan is such that it would unreasonably or unnecessarily increase access to land in an agriculture land reserve.

This means that approving officers, as a condition of approval, can require changes to a subdivision plan to ensure no unreasonable interference occurs with farm operations. These changes may include adequate buffering of farmland from the subdivision or the removal of unnecessary roads directed at the ALR.

The Land Title Act also governs covenants, which are extra requirements on land that may be of a positive or negative nature. Covenant provisions may be in respect of the use of land or of a building on the land, whether land can or cannot be built on, and the subdivision (or not) of land. Such covenants must be supported by policy or benefit the public interest.

Water Act

All rights to water in BC are vested in (owned by) the Crown on behalf of its residents. This means that having access to surface water does not give a person the right to use, divert, or store this water. The authority to use surface water, including its diversion and storage, along with the volumes of water being used, is obtained by a license issued by the provincial government. The provincial *Water Act* and the *Water Protection Act* provide the legislation. This legislation is directly related to irrigation and industrial purposes for agricultural use.

The BC government is presently “modernising” the *Water Act* to respond to current and future challenges. The review has primary concerns for protecting stream health and aquatic environments, improving water governance arrangements, introducing more flexibility and efficiency in the water allocation system, and regulating ground water use in priority areas and for large withdrawals.

IAF Local Government Agricultural Planning Program

By the late 1990s, the province had set a clear intention for what can be accomplished through agricultural planning and provided a legislative framework to support planning efforts. In this context, the Investment Agriculture Foundation established the *Local Government Agricultural Planning* program to support projects that will lead to development of agricultural area plans within municipalities and regional districts. The purpose of this program is to “support projects that will lead to development of agricultural area plans within municipalities and regional districts.” “The overarching expected outcome of an Agricultural Area Plan is that it be formally adopted and used to guide implementation activities.” In addition to supporting the development of agricultural area plans, the program will also support pre-plans and implementation projects, such as agriculture viability studies, agriculture strategies, arability studies, and foodshed analyses. As stated in the program materials, the expected benefits of agricultural planning include reduced urban/rural conflict, improved local economic activity from farming, consistency with provincial policy and legislation, and sustainable communities with balanced economic diversity.

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As inferred by its application criteria, an effective agricultural plan addresses matters of governance, economic viability, and agricultural opportunities. Thereby, a plan should include the following elements:

- a shared vision and the implementation of a plan for agriculture in the community;
- a description of the role of the Agricultural Advisory Committee and how the Committee will be included on an on-going basis in the development and approval of local government plans, bylaws, and regulations;
- Enhance agricultural opportunities in the community;
- Means to lessen the potential for land-use conflict; and,
- Evidence that agriculture is integrated with other priorities.

The LGAP funding can be used to support a range of activities relating to the development of an agricultural area plan. These activities can include

- Inventory work to enhance the understanding of agriculture land use and farming activities
- Identification of issues and opportunities of importance to the farm community
- Determination of the potential impacts of planning and regulatory proposals on the farming community
- Developing community-based strategies to address issues and opportunities of importance to the farm community
- Defining outcomes or performance measures to ensure that agricultural planning goals and objectives are clearly understood and monitored and actions are taken to ensure their effective implementation
- Developing ongoing consultative links with the farm community

EVALUATION DESIGN

Purpose of the evaluation

The purpose of evaluating the *Local Government Agricultural Planning* funding program is both formative and summative. The formative evaluation aims to improve the funding program by examining the method of its delivery, the quality of its implementation, and the review of the local government context, procedures, inputs, etc. The summative evaluation will examine the effects or outcomes of the funding program by describing what happened subsequent to developing the agricultural plan, assessing the extent to which the funding can be said to have contributed to the outcome, and determining the overall impact of the funding beyond the immediate target of creating an agriculture plan.

The objective of the evaluation was to acquire information about and assess the intended outcomes of the IAF funding program against what has been achieved. Each of the funded projects was assessed against the expected outcome of integrating agricultural interests with formal land use policies, with the specific aim to use the formal adoption of

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AAPs as part of local government Official Community Plans as the means to this end. The broad objective of the evaluation is to improve the development of future agricultural area plans in order to strengthen planning processes and protect the importance of agriculture to communities.

The aims of the evaluation were to investigate whether the funding program caused demonstrable effects on specifically defined target outcomes and to assess the overall effects, intended or unintended, of the program as a whole. The diversity of the projects and the number of completed plans limited the scope of the evaluation. Of the 27 agricultural plans funded to date, only sixteen have been completed long enough to assess the immediate impacts. The remaining projects have only recently been funded and have either not started or are just underway. Of the completed plans, the agricultural land base, agricultural operations, and political context mean that plans have been developed for different reasons, with different starting points, and with different goals and objectives. This diversity means that it is important to assess each plan individually with limited opportunity to compare outcomes. Furthermore, the breadth and influence of external factors on the agricultural sector (e.g., non-agricultural priorities, such as urban development and economic growth) means that it is not possible to directly associate outcomes of the agricultural planning processes with broader provincial and community priorities. As such, it is beyond the scope of this evaluation to assess the impacts, both quantitative and qualitative, that plans had on local agriculture and communities (e.g., to what extent, if any, have plans helped farming) or the extent that the intended benefits (e.g., reduce urban/rural conflict, improve local economic activity from farming, and help build sustainable communities with balanced economic diversity) were achieved. With these limitations in mind, the evaluation focussed on the direct outcomes of the completed plans in relation to each project's objectives as stated on funding applications.

The evaluation was completed between May 1, 2010 and December 31, 2010.

Methods

At the start of the evaluation project, 27 projects had been funded through the LGAP program. The evaluation was designed to collect information about what processes were used to develop these agriculture plans (e.g., who was involved and to what extent) and what outcomes were achieved (e.g., were the plans officially approved or adopted as part of an Official Community Plan). Data were collected from both secondary and primary sources. The latter involved both in-person and telephone interviews.

Secondary sources

Several secondary sources were used in the data collection process to inform the formative aspect of the program evaluation. All of the completed agricultural plans were obtained from IAF, local government websites, or from local government staff. All aspects of these plans were reviewed. Applications for funding submitted to IAF by proponents were also reviewed. The stated goals and objectives were of particular interest.

Information about the LGAP program was also collected. The primary source of information for applicants is the IAF brochure, *Helping Communities Plan for an*

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Agricultural Future. This document provides information about the benefits of agricultural planning, the expected outcomes, eligible activities, and qualities of successful applications. The brochure also directs applicants to the Ministry of Agriculture's *Strengthening Farming* program website (www.agf.gov.bc.ca/resmgmt/sf/). The Ministry's website outlines two components of the program: Farm Practices Protection and Planning for Agriculture. From the home page the visitor can follow links to information related to agricultural planning.

Primary sources

Primary data were also collected about the LGAP program. These data informed the summative aspect of the program's evaluation. Efforts were made to contact people who were directly involved in both the creation and implementation of LGAP-funded projects. Members of AACs, planning staff, councillors, and regional agrologists were sought, based on contact information provided on municipal websites and within the completed plans. Interviewees were asked to recommend other potential people to be interviewed. The aim was to interview people with a range of opinions and experiences. These people were recruited because they were or are in a position to influence the development and delivery of the LGAP program. The information collected from these interviews informed the researchers' understanding of the intended outcomes of the funding program.

Primary data about the completed agricultural plans were collected through in-person interviews. People were identified as key informants who could share their knowledge and experiences of various stages of the planning process and who collectively represented multiple perspectives of the outcomes. Key informants included agriculture producers, elected officials, Ministry of Agriculture staff, and municipal planning staff. Researchers sought to interview the following for each project:

- Members of the steering committee responsible for the funded project;
- Members of Agriculture Advisory Committees (or of equivalent);
- Members of each farming community;
- Members of current and former municipal councils;
- Members of current and former municipal planning staff; and,
- Consultants.

Researchers also asked key informants a follow-up question via email. After completing the field interviews the researchers determined that the terms 'agricultural planning' and 'agricultural area plans' were used differently from place to place, person to person, and often times interchangeably. This confusion over terms was not anticipated at the start of the project. The purpose of the additional question was to clarify the use of these terms to help clarify the scope of the completed plans.

The interviews were semi-structured. Semi-structured interviews allow for focussed, conversational communication. Semi-structured interviews allow researchers the opportunity to structure each interview with specific regard for the particular knowledge and experiences of the interviewee. This format also allows interviewees to raise issues that were important to them or that they felt were important to agriculture in the area. The interview guide promotes uniformity of topics across the whole sample, while allowing each particular interview to be different with specific regard to new questions elicited by the answers given by the interviewee. The flexibility of this

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interview technique was beneficial for this evaluation project given the range of key informants being interviewed and the varying contexts in which each agricultural plan was created.

Guides were used for both sets of interviewees, those involved with the development of the LGAP program and those involved with the development of agricultural plans (included in Appendix A). Each guide was centred on specific topics with sub-sets of questions available to the interviewer to use as prompts. The questions for interviews about the intended outcomes of the LGAP program were focussed on the stated goals and objectives of the funding program, the role of local governments, and the distinction between agricultural planning and agricultural area plans. The questions for interviews about the agricultural plans were organised in seven sections: profile of interviewee, issues, objectives, process, implementation, outcomes, and use of IAF funding.

All interviewees were asked to provide consent. Interviewees were informed that their participation was completely voluntary and that they could withdraw their participation at any time during the evaluation project without penalty or risk of any kind. Interviewees could also choose to answer only the questions with which they were comfortable. With permission of the interviewee, interviews were audio recorded to ensure accuracy of transcriptions and allow the interviewer to focus on the conversation. Telephone interviews were not recorded. Individual interview transcriptions were emailed back to the respective participants and asked to verify the statements that had been transcribed. Participants were again given the opportunity to remove data, statements, or their participation. No participants withdrew their participation. No personal identifying information (e.g., home address or telephone number) was used. Interviewees had the option of allowing their professional information to be used or not.

RESULTS

The results of the evaluation are presented in three parts. The first part is a summary of the information collected from interviews with people involved with the founding and shaping of the LGAP program. The second part focusses on the outcomes of the funded projects based on analyses of the contents of the completed plans. The third part presents the results of the information collected from interviews with key informants involved with agricultural plans.

Part 1. Perspectives of ‘founders and shapers’ of the LGAP program

To collect data about the intended outcomes of the LGAP program, seven people were interviewed via telephone or in person. These people included staff and board members of IAF, Ministry of Agriculture staff, and representatives of agricultural organisations.

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The responses to each of the questions asked are presented here with the intention to illustrate key issues raised and the breadth of responses received.

The aim of the LGAP program is “to develop practical and viable solutions to rural-urban issues and identify opportunities that benefit both agriculture and the community.”

What does this mean to you?

Responses to this question were related to current issues that local governments and farmers are dealing with. These include increasing competition for agricultural land and the rising tension that can lead to rural/urban conflict. In the context of these concerns, there is a need for more agricultural planning to give voice to the agricultural sector and to ensure that agricultural viability is recognised as an important part of land use planning and community development, especially by local governments. The solutions included strategies, plans, and bylaws.

If this objective was achieved then what do you think would be the outcomes?

Identified outcomes include the elimination or reduction of constraints and concerns related to the current issues, i.e., reduced conflict, unwarranted nuisance complaints. Corresponding outcomes include greater awareness and understanding among local governments and the public, better policies to guide land use planning, improved infrastructure (e.g., drainage, transportation, signage), greater knowledge of agricultural land base (i.e., through a land use inventory), and improved governance (e.g., an established AAC). If the objectives were achieved then the ultimate outcome is a more viable agricultural sector.

Which of these outcomes do you think are the most important?

The responses to this question varied. This variation is in part related to the inter-relations among the outcomes. Policy, infrastructure, awareness, and economic development, for example, are difficult to isolate. Effective AACs were identified as one of the most important outcomes: “If local governments don’t have an AAC at the table to raise interests, then nothing is going to get anywhere.” Another key outcome is improving on-farm practices: “[plans] are not going to be able to address the broader economic environment under which agriculture operates, but what they can address is that if a farmer chooses a particular type of production in an area, he should be more able to undertake those activities without running into issues with his neighbours.” In this context the most important outcome appears to be solutions that guide local government decisions.

What is the role of a local government in achieving these important outcomes?

The responses suggested that the primary role of local governments is to support agriculture through two functions. The first is to manage the land base. As one person stated, the role of local governments is “to support the use of land that has been

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agricultural land for generations, to support the continued use of that land, and to protect the land and the stewardship of the land.” The second function is to support farmers and their efforts to manage their business, as illustrated by the following response. “Local Government can play a huge role in helping to facilitate more viable agriculture by very significantly reducing costs, e.g., taxation issues, access to water issues, roads.”

For the LGAP program, “The overarching expected outcome of an Agricultural Area Plan is that it be formally adopted and used to guide implementation activities.” In your view, what are the intended benefits of formally adopting an Agricultural Area Plan?

Interviewees explained that to be formally adopted gives the plan legitimacy with a higher likelihood that the local government will be committed to the plan and implementing its recommendations. As one person states, “[To be adopted means] that it becomes part of the OCP, and therefore provides guidance to municipal planners in their activities related to the development of their community.” Another stated, “If it is not adopted, and only received, they can simply say, ‘that’s not our plan’.”

Interviewees identified a difference between ‘formally adopted’ and accepted or received, while recognising that the difference can be a matter of degree, as recommendations from a plan can be implemented in either case. Interviewees also acknowledged the technical aspects of preparing bylaws, noting that the writing of bylaws may be beyond the scope of the funded project. “Local governments can receive it, but it doesn’t necessarily have to be in bylaw format. This could be an implementation strategy... The actual bylaw could take the applicable items and write them up in bylaw terms.”

Interviewees also raised questions about whether it is appropriate for IAF to require an agricultural plan to be formally adopted as a condition of funding. The issue is whether this is an undesirable step into the political realm. “Requiring OCP inclusion could render the process awkward and political... I would prefer to get the documents that we’re getting and fight the political battles separately. I would not want to see IAF’s funding contingent on that piece; this would be a backwards step.”

To what extent do you distinguish between Agricultural Area Plans and agricultural planning?

When asked to distinguish between ‘agricultural planning’ and ‘agricultural area plans’ the responses were somewhat consistent. There was a sense of ‘agricultural planning’ being broader and more encompassing than area plans. Two interviewees described ‘agricultural area plans’ succinctly as a formal plan incorporated into an OCP. Others described ‘agricultural area plans’ as tools of local government.

Part 2. Outcomes of Funded Projects

Since 1999 IAF has funded the development of 27 projects through the LGAP program. As listed in Tables 1 and 2 respectively, these projects were organised into two categories: (1) under development and (2) completed. The evaluation focussed on the 16 completed projects, as these projects enabled the researchers to assess both the individual plans and the direct outcomes of the planning processes.

Table 1. Agricultural Plans Funded by IAFBC: Plans Under Development

Municipality/Regional District	Year Funded
Regional District of Alberni-Clayoquot	2010
City of Chilliwack	2010
Corporation of Delta	2010
District of Squamish	2010
Central Kootenay Regional District	2010
City of Kamloops	2010
City of Campbell River	2010
Cowichan Valley Regional District	2010
District of West Kelowna	2010
District of Central Saanich	2009
Kootenay-Boundary Regional District	2008

Scope and contents of agricultural plans

General scope

The general scope of the completed plans was similar. All but one plan provided a vision statement for agriculture in the area. Every plan focussed on both land use issues and economic development. Land use issues included loss of agricultural lands, development pressures, competition with non-farm uses of agricultural land, and rural-urban interface conflicts. Among economic issues, high land prices, declining related services, lack of infrastructure, and undeveloped local markets were identified in many plans.

With regard for use of the terms ‘agricultural plan’ and ‘agricultural area plan,’ these terms were used inconsistently among the completed plans.

Contents

The contents of the completed plans were assessed against a set of key considerations for developing an Agricultural Area Plan’s contents. As identified by Smith (1998), these key considerations are: legislative context; background; objectives and goals (and vision); plan policies, and mapping. The results are shown in Table 3. It should be noted that these key considerations are for an AAP, not for an agricultural plan. Whereas the latter might include extensive background information and maps, an AAP is more succinct because it is designed as a land use policy document to be included as a schedule of an OCP. The content analysis was based on final documents and did not include background reports.

Overall, a sufficient breadth of detail was included in all but two plans. In these two cases the plans did not include the legislative context. Maps were missing in some final documents, including maps of ALR lands and of the plan area. The level of detail of each plan is influenced by several factors, including the intended purpose of the

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Table 2. Agricultural Plans Funded by IAFBC: Plans Completed
(Recently completed plans listed first.)

Local government	Funded/ completed	Title	Description	Supporting documents
District of North Saanich	2008-10	North Saanich Agriculture Plan	Final report (87 pages)	
Squamish-Lillooet Regional District (Electoral Area C - Pemberton Valley)	2008-10	Pemberton Valley Agricultural Plan	Draft Bylaw No. 1161, 2011 (45 pages)	Background reports: Phase I: Situational Analysis. Phase 2: Issues and Options.
District of Kent	2007-09	Agricultural Area Plan	OCP Bylaw No. 1458, 2010 (32 pages plus background report)	Background and Implementation: District of Kent Agricultural Area Plan (45 pages) (note: included as part of Bylaw No. 1458)
District of Maple Ridge	2008-09	Maple Ridge Agricultural Plan	Final report (38 pages)	Phase 1 report: Situation Analysis (70 pages) Phase 2 report (13 pages plus 7-page appendix)
District of Coldstream	2007-09	Agricultural Plan: Planning Strategy	Final report (44 pages)	Agricultural Plan: Background Report (102 pages)
District of Lake Country	2007-08	Agriculture Plan	Final report (124 pages)	
Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen (El. Area C - Rural Oliver)	2007-08	Agricultural Area Plan	Final report (56 pages)	A statistical profile of agriculture in the area
Salt-Spring Island (Islands Trust)	2006-08	Area Farm Plan	Final report (102 pages)	Public Consultation Summary (143 pages)
District of Summerland	2004-08	Agriculture Plan	Final report (66 pages); includes summaries of two background reports as appendices.	Summerland Agriculture Today: Resources, Economics, and Policy. Summerland Agriculture Today: Community Interests.
Corporation of Township of Spallumcheen	2005-06	Agricultural Plan	Phase 3 final report (27 pages)	Phase 1 Report: Agricultural Situation Profile (43 pages) Phase 2 Report: Issues and Opportunities Analysis (11 pages)
Regional District of Central Okanagan	2005-05	Agricultural Plan	Final report (54 pages) (excluding appendix of maps)	Background report (74 pages)
City of Salmon Arm	2003-04	Agricultural Area Plan	Final report; focussed on policy component (41 pages)	Background report (51 pages)
Regional District of Comox-Strathcona	2001-02	Comox Valley Agricultural Plan	Phase 2 final report; includes summary of Phase 1 (47 pages)	Phase 1: Report 1 - History and Resources (54 pages) Phase 1: Report 2 - Issues and Opportunities (24 pages)
City of Richmond	1999-03	Agricultural Viability Strategy	Final report (90 pages)	Refers to City's Agricultural Profile
District Municipality of North Cowichan	2000-01	Strategic Agricultural Plan	Final report (55 pages)	
City of Surrey	1998-99	Surrey Agricultural Plan	Phase 2 report: key issues and recommended action (64 pages)	Phase 1 report: Analysis of Economic and Planning Issues Facing Agriculture in the City of Surrey

* Number of pages includes all pages except the title page.

Table 3. Contents of agricultural plans
(Recently completed plans listed first.)

	Legislative Context	Back-ground	Vision, Goals, Obj,	Policies	Maps
District of North Saanich	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	X
Squamish-Lillooet Regional District (Electoral Area C - Pemberton Valley)	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓
District of Kent*	✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	X
District of Maple Ridge	✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓	✓
District of Coldstream	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
District of Lake Country	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen (El. Area C - Rural Oliver)	✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓
Salt-Spring Island (Islands Trust)*	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	X
District of Summerland	X	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	X
Corporation of Township of Spallumcheen	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
Regional District of Central Okanagan*	✓✓	✓	✓	✓✓✓	✓✓
City of Salmon Arm	✓✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
Regional District of Comox-Strathcona	X	✓	✓	✓	✓
City of Richmond*	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓
District Municipality of North Cowichan*	✓	✓	✓✓	✓	X
City of Surrey*	✓	✓	✓	✓	X

Legend: ✓ - Minimum information included
 ✓✓ - Moderate level of detail provided
 ✓✓✓ - High level of detail provided
 X - not included

* Adopted as sub-area plan

document. The more detailed documents were often comprehensive strategies that include more information. The less detailed documents tended to be concise, policy-oriented plans written for formal adoption by the local government and supported by background reports. Such things as the size of the budget also influenced the level of detail and, correspondingly, the length of the document.

Legislative context and policies

It is important to provide statements that provide a legislative context as these help to integrate policies across jurisdictions. Achieving this level of policy integration is a key foundation for building partnerships between the Province and local governments. To assess this level of policy integration, each of the completed plans was assessed based on explicit references to the following regulations: *Agricultural Land Commission Act*; *Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act*; *Water Act*; *Land Title Act*; and *Local Government Act*. Each of these acts is described above. The analysis also included whether or not agricultural plans include references to two important policy tools available to local governments: development permit areas and agricultural impact assessments. The results of the content analysis of legislative context and policies are shown in Tables 4 and 5. Table 4 shows the frequency that each element is mentioned in all of the completed plans. The references to specific legislation and policy tools are further analysed as to whether the reference is included in the local government's OCP or in the

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Table 4. Summary: References to legislation and policy tools.

	Legislative context					Policy tools	
	ALC Act	Right to Farm	Water Act	Land Title Act	Local Govt Act	AIA	DPAs
Number of completed plans							
Identified in OCP	11	8	0	0	2	2	4
Identified in agricultural plan	4	7	4	8	10	5	7
Not identified	1	1	11	8	3	9	4
Other (not available; in process)			1		1		1

Table 5. References to legislation and policy tools by completed plans by area.
(Recently completed plans listed first.)

	Legislative context					Policy tools	
	ALC Act	Right to Farm	Water Act	Land Title Act	Local Govt Act	AIA	DPAs
District of North Saanich	OCP	OCP	✓	X	OCP	X	✓
Squamish-Lillooet Regional District (Electoral Area C - Pemberton Valley)	✓	X	X	X	✓	OCP	✓
District of Kent	OCP	OCP	*	✓	*	✓	X
District of Maple Ridge	OCP	OCP	X	X	X	OCP	✓
District of Coldstream	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓
District of Lake Country	OCP	OCP	X	✓	✓	X	OCP
Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen (Electoral Area C - Rural Oliver, Oliver)	OCP	OCP	X	X	OCP	✓	In process
Salt-Spring Island (Islands Trust)	OCP	OCP	X	X	✓	X	OCP
District of Summerland	OCP	✓	X	X	X	X	X
Corporation of Township of Spallumcheen	OCP	✓	X	X	✓	X	X
Regional District of Central Okanagan	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
City of Salmon Arm	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	X	✓
Regional District of Comox-Strathcona	OCP	OCP	X	✓	✓	X	✓
City of Richmond	OCP	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	OCP
District Municipality of North Cowichan	X	✓	X	X	X	X	X
City of Surrey	OCP	OCP	✓	✓	✓	✓	OCP

agricultural plan. The premise here is that an explicit reference in the OCP is stronger than in an agricultural plan (especially if the plan is not formally adopted as a secondary plan). These results are shown in more detail by plan area in Table 5.

The results show that the ALC Act is most frequently mentioned overall, and most frequently mentioned in an OCP. The FFPA is also frequently mentioned in both OCPs and agricultural plans. The *Local Government Act* is frequently mentioned in agricultural plans. The *Water Act* is referenced the least, but may be more important in the future as an outcome of the current ‘modernisation’ of the Act. Table 4 also shows that both development permit areas and agricultural impact assessments are often identified as policy tools. In some cases these references are not to existing policies but are made in the context of recommendations to adopt such tools. At this point, agricultural impact

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assessments are not widely employed. Overall, most completed plans provide sufficient details about the legislative context that helps to integrate policies across jurisdictions.

Governance

Agricultural Advisory Committees (AAC) are identified as important contributors to governance. As noted above, “a description of the role of the Agricultural Advisory Committee and how the Committee will be included on an on-going basis in the development and approval of local government plans, bylaws, and regulations” should be part of an effective agricultural plan. The effectiveness of applicants to meet this criterion is summarised in Table 6. The role of the AAC was identified in all but one agricultural plan (Rural Oliver). The role of the AAC was defined in Salt Spring Island’s OCP. All but three (Summerland, Salmon Arm, Spallumcheen) AACs remained active after the plans were completed. In most cases, an AAC already existed, in some cases an AAC was established for the purpose of creating the agricultural plan, and in one case (Salmon Arm) establishing an AAC was listed as a recommendation of the plan.

Table 6. Agricultural Advisory Committees.

Municipality/District	AAC Role Defined in Plan	Active after plan completed
District of North Saanich	✓	✓
Squamish-Lillooet Regional District (Electoral Area C - Pemberton Valley)	✓	✓
District of Kent	✓	✓
District of Maple Ridge	✓	✓
District of Coldstream	✓	✓
District of Lake Country	✓	✓
Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen (Electoral Area C - Rural Oliver, Oliver)	X	✓
Salt-Spring Island (Islands Trust)	OCP	✓
District of Summerland	✓	X
Corporation of Township of Spallumcheen	✓	X
Regional District of Central Okanagan	✓	✓
City of Salmon Arm	✓	X
Regional District of Comox-Strathcona	✓	✓
City of Richmond	✓	✓
District Municipality of North Cowichan	✓	✓
City of Surrey	✓	✓

Direct outcomes: formally adopted as Agricultural Area Plan

The overarching aim of the LGAP program is stated as follows: “The overarching expected outcome of an Agricultural Area Plan is that it be formally adopted and used to guide implementation activities.” For purposes of the analysis, each funded project was viewed as either a general agricultural plan or, when formally adopted, as a secondary

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plan of an OCP. The term “formally adopted” was distinguished from two other possible outcomes: received by council (or board) or named in the OCP. These distinctions among terms are explained and illustrated with examples as follows.

Received by council (or board)

The term received (or accepted, endorsed, etc.) is used herein to mean that the completed plan was presented to the local government and received via a formal motion. Generally, such a formal motion has no legal status and offers little assurance that the plan will be implemented or adhered to.¹⁴ The following are examples of local government motions for receiving agricultural plans.

- District of North Saanich
“That the Draft Agriculture Plan dated January 2010...be received and implemented.”¹⁵
- District of Lake Country
“That Council receive the District of Lake Country Community Agriculture Plan with its policies being brought forward for consideration during deliberations on the Official Community Plan, zoning, infrastructure, budget, and committee review.”¹⁶
- Regional District of Comox-Strathcona
THAT the Regional Board
 - i) endorse the Comox Valley Agricultural Plan products completed as part of Phase Two of the planning process;
 - ii) direct staff to bring forward a detailed report outlining the implementation tasks for the CVAP which fall specifically within the Regional District’s purview to address; the aim being to determine what tasks are feasible to address within the scope of the current year’s budget and works programs;
 - iii) direct that staff, following consultation with the Comox Valley Agricultural Plan Steering Committee, bring forward a possible membership list, a draft terms of reference and working outline for the operation of an Agricultural Plan Implementation Committee¹⁷

Named

To be ‘named’ means that the completed plan was formally identified in the Official Community Plan of a local government. Being named lends legitimacy to the plan. The meaningfulness of the naming must be interpreted in context of the statement as well as the general practices of the local government. As such, the strength of the language associated with the naming of the agricultural plan is important, as illustrated in the following examples from the City of Surrey 2009 OCP.

- Agricultural “objectives are reinforced by Surrey’s Agricultural Plan” (p. 5);

¹⁴ Notwithstanding this general rule, it is possible that some local governments may take action on all ‘received’ documents. A more thorough assessment of the history of local government practices is necessary to affirm the analysis.

¹⁵ District of North Saanich, minutes of Board meeting, March 8, 2010.

¹⁶ District of Lake Country, minutes of Board meeting, April 1, 2008.

¹⁷ Regional District of Comox-Strathcona, minutes of Board meeting, Monday, February 24, 2003.

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- “The City of Surrey completed an Agricultural Plan in 1999, which was adopted by Surrey Council in 1999 to address the continued and growing pressures on agricultural land, and to propose a range of measures to maintain a healthy farming economy in Surrey” (p. 91);
- Maintain Agricultural Activities: “Utilize guidelines and policies recommended in the Surrey Agricultural Plan” (p. 92).

Revised

For this evaluation report, the term “revised” is used when there is evidence that the OCP was influenced by the completed agricultural plan. For example, in the District of Lake Country, there are significant differences between the old 2001 OCP and the new 2010 OCP. The changes to the OCP appear to be linked to the completed agricultural plan (see motion above).

Adopted

An AAP must be approved by the same process as an OCP and, when adopted, attains the same legal status as an OCP. An agricultural plan becomes an Agricultural Area Plan only when it is formally adopted by bylaw as a secondary plan of an OCP. To be adopted the agricultural plan must provide sufficient direction to guide the OCP and include clear statements of policy. The following is an example of a motion to formally adopt an AAP as a secondary plan in the District of Summerland: “Bylaw 2000-342 – Text amendment of the Official Community Plan to add the Agricultural Area Plan as a secondary plan.”¹⁸ After third reading, the motion was carried.

Correspondingly, the formal status of land use policies requires succinct language, as illustrated in the Squamish-Lillooet Regional District where the draft Pemberton Valley Agricultural Area Plan is being revised before being adopted. The Board requested that the bylaw be sent back to staff “to restructure the document so that the policy components be identified and clarified into a more succinct bylaw.” In response to the Board’s request, the Agricultural Advisory Committee revised the plan “to focus on the recommended actions, restructure the introduction section, and minimize the background information, in order to keep the plan as succinct as possible.”

In the following analysis it is important to keep in mind that not all are appropriate for Agricultural Area Plans.¹⁹ AAPs are better suited for cases where the agricultural area is closely integrated with urban areas, the farming area is relatively large and cohesive, or where the planning issues are complex. Instead of an AAP, the option is for a local government to develop strong agricultural policy statements within its OCP. This is a better option when the agricultural land base consists of relatively small, isolated blocks or of large areas with limited agricultural diversity.

With regard for being “formally adopted” there are mixed results, as summarised in Table 7. All 16 of the completed agricultural plans were received by local governments via formal resolutions. Six of the completed plans have been adopted as a sub-area Agricultural Area Plan, with one under review for adoption.

A more detailed analysis of completed plans by area is presented in Table 8. Each funded project was also reviewed in relation to its stated goals. Both the

¹⁸ District of Summerland, minutes of Board meeting, Monday, October 27, 2008.

¹⁹ See Smith (1998), *Planning for Agriculture*, p. 7-5.

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Table 7. Summary: outcomes of completed agricultural plans.

	Received by Council	Official Community Plan		
		Named	Revised	Adopted
Number of completed plans	16	6	7	6

Table 8. Outcomes of completed agricultural plans by area.

(Most recent plans listed first.)

Municipality/District	Stated Goal		Received by Council	Official Community Plan		
	Applctn	Plan		Named	Revised	Adopted
District of North Saanich	Revise	Revise	✓	X	X	X
Squamish-Lillooet Regional District (Electoral Area C - Pemberton Valley)	Adopt	Adopt	✓	In process		
District of Kent	Adopt	Adopt	✓	✓	✓	✓
District of Maple Ridge	Revise	Revise	✓	X	X	X
District of Coldstream	Adopt	Adopt	✓	In process		
District of Lake Country	Not avail.	Revise	✓	X	✓	X
Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen (Area C-Rural Oliver)	Revise	Revise	✓	In process		
Salt-Spring Island (Islands Trust)	Not avail.	Revise	✓	X	✓	✓
District of Summerland	Revise	Adopt	✓	✓	X	X
Corporation of Township of Spallumcheen	Revise	Revise	✓	X	X	X
Regional District of Central Okanagan	Revise	Revise	✓	✓	✓	✓
City of Salmon Arm	Revise	Revise	✓	X	X	X
Regional District of Comox-Strathcona	Revise	Revise	✓	X	X	X
City of Richmond	Revise	Adopt	✓	✓	✓	✓
District Municipality of North Cowichan	Adopt	Adopt	✓	✓	✓	✓
City of Surrey	Revise	Revise	✓	✓	✓	✓

application to IAF for funding and the completed agricultural plan were reviewed for each project. The table shows whether the stated goal was to revise (i.e., inform, assist, influence, direct, etc.) agricultural land use policies and regulations or to have the agricultural plan formally adopted as part of the OCP.

The results demonstrate a relationship between stated goals and project outcomes. When the stated goal of the plan was to have it adopted as part of the OCP in five of six cases the goal was achieved. This relationship is similar for the stated goal in applications. In contrast, when there is no mention of having plans adopted as secondary plans then the plan is most likely to be only ‘received’ by local governments.

In support of the above analysis, detailed summaries for nine of the established plans were completed: City of Richmond, City of Surrey, Regional District of North Cowichan, Regional District of Comox Valley, City of Salmon Arm, District of Summerland, Regional District of Central Okanagan, Township of Spallumcheen. These summaries are included in this report as Appendix B

Part 3. Perspectives of Key Informants

The results of the interviews with key informants about completed agricultural plans are presented in this part of the chapter. The section is organised into six categories. The section starts with an account of the data collection process (i.e., who was interviewed, how many interviews were completed). The results of the interviews are then discussed with regard to use of the terms ‘agricultural plans’ and ‘agricultural area plans’, general outcomes of the funded projects, reflections on the effectiveness of the planning processes, the role of AACs, and finally, reflections on IAF’s LGAP funding program.

Data collection

The following discussion of the views expressed by key informants is based on a total of 34 in-person interviews. These interviews covered twelve of the 16 completed plans: Surrey, Richmond, Comox Valley, North Cowichan, Cowichan Valley Regional District, North Saanich, Salt-Spring Island, Maple Ridge, Spallumcheen, Rural Oliver, Salmon Arm, and Summerland. The interviews also indirectly addressed the Central Okanagan Regional District, the District of Coldstream, the District of Lake Country, the City of Campbell River, the City of Abbotsford, and the Greater Vancouver Regional District. Key informants interviewed included municipal councilors, regional directors, mayors, agrologists, economic development managers, agricultural society members, ALC land-use planners, farmers, municipal planners, and consultants. Many of these people were members of local Agricultural Advisory Committees or of others committees responsible for developing the agricultural plans. The following results are based on these interviews, and are therefore limited to a sample of the completed plans. The points raised may not be representative of all completed plans and may not be comprehensive of all possible views.

‘Agricultural planning’ versus ‘agricultural area plans’

Two short questions were posed to key informants: Briefly, how do you distinguish these two terms? And how would you use each of them to describe events in your area? The results are summarised in Table 9.

The responses illustrate a common distinction between an agricultural plan as being more general and an agricultural area plan being more specific to local agriculture. However, the collective responses show that the terms are not used consistently. Only two of twelve responses noted the relation of an agriculture area plan to an OCP. It is also noted here that the two terms were not used consistently in the naming of completed plans (see Table 1 above). The different uses of these terms are significant in relation to the available literature, especially Smith’s *Planning for Agriculture*, which explicitly defines an Agriculture Area Plan as a sub-area plan of a community plan, as discussed above.

Table 9. Key informant descriptions of ‘agricultural planning’ and ‘agricultural area plans’

‘agricultural planning’	‘agricultural area plans’
Much broader, including consideration of markets, food systems, and a wide range of economic, environmental and social issues related to agriculture that are not necessarily about land use	A land use plan for a bounded area, likely the ALR portion of the city (or the OCP “Agricultural” designation)
A process	A document. You should not have a plan without first planning.
A more generic term for any planning process related to agriculture. The term may also serve as a shorthand phrase for agricultural area planning.	The formal term for a specific process related to agricultural planning.
A more generic term; it might be used to cover a range of issues relating to agriculture	A specific plan for a specific area
A process.	A plan.
Agricultural planning is more general and is incorporated into the current and long range planning in the City. Overall policies in the City’s OCP support planning for agriculture, such as the urban containment boundary, not encouraging ALR exclusions and subdivisions, agricultural zoning that permits a range of agricultural uses, buffering between residential and agricultural uses.	Agricultural Area Plan is a specific plan to support agriculture. While some of its recommendations were geared to supporting and enhancing agricultural planning, it also provided recommendations related to agricultural operations that were beyond the usual scope of current and long range planning.
A concept	The realisation of that concept [agricultural planning] in document form.
A term that can be done by group, level of government. or agency. It does not necessarily have any regulation or authority attached to the process but it does provide future direction in the plan area for agriculture.	A regulatory document. Similar in authority as a Local Area Plan. It underpins OCP’s which provide the local government with broad policies on agriculture, such as “support local food production”. An Agriculture Area Plan narrows OCP policies to specific situations on the ground and make them actionable.
An all-encompassing term/process.	Only one component of “agricultural planning”.

General Outcomes

Overall, applicants were satisfied with the process to develop the agricultural plans and of the final plans’ contents. Many interviewees were very pleased with the impacts of the plans on the agricultural area. Examples of outcomes of the completed plans that were identified by interviewees are listed in Tables 10 and 11 (on following pages). The first table lists outcomes associated with plans that were adopted as secondary plans. The outcomes in the list are often linked to agricultural land use policies and infrastructure improvements. The second table lists outcomes of completed plans that were ‘received’ by local governments and not adopted as part of the Official Community Plan. The outcomes identified in the list are more closely related to economic development and outreach programs.

The broad benefits of agricultural plans to help build sustainable communities are perhaps the least obvious, and in some cases, not evident. “This [building sustainable communities] isn’t being done by this plan, or through the regional district, but through other organizations, such as the farmers institute and the farmers themselves.” It is also more evident to connect community well-being to other social concerns: “A growing

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Table 10. Outcomes of Agricultural Area Plans ‘adopted’ by local governments

Municipality/District	Outcomes identified by interviewees
District of North Saanich	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have recommended changes to zoning for temporary farm worker housing.
Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen (Area C Rural Oliver)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The District is working towards zoning bylaw changes for Area C. For example, the District (Area C) is moving from gross floor size to footprint size regulations - They were only able to include a ‘few’ recommendations from the AAP - More feedback has been provided to the Economic Development Office. - There is generally better public awareness of agriculture
Salt-Spring Island (Islands Trust)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agricultural Alliance has been established - No formal tracking of land-use decisions
District of Summerland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A positive impact of the plan is a possible increase in awareness throughout the public domain - There is a new water treatment plant, where treated water is sent to residential users, while untreated water is used for irrigation systems (outlined in the AAP) - The District is currently looking at both “Homeplate” and “Secondary Dwelling” bylaws.
District Municipality of North Cowichan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The agricultural advisory committee was formed soon after the adoption of the plan; all ALC applications, agricultural policy discussions are referred to this committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Has opened up an avenue of communication between the farming community and council on agricultural issues that was not present before the AAC - The AAC heard and reviewed land use issues, such as ALR applications, but made little movement towards addressing the agricultural sectors issues. This has taken a different meaning at the political level because of the AAC - A commitment by the planning department to change the regulations and bylaws has helped to implement the North Cowichan Plan - Made progress on completing a draft “fill and soil removal bylaw” - An agreement has been made by North Cowichan to develop a “Homesite Development Envelope Bylaw” - Municipal land which has been put into the ALR
City of Richmond	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Zoning bylaws have been updated: accessory building setbacks have been changed; soil fill bylaws have been updated; tree bylaws have been changed - Establishment of the AAC - Development applications are looked at in conjunction with the AAP - Adoption of buffer zones - A further study on irrigation and drainage - A highway overpass (Nelson Road overpass) has been planned (to route truck traffic to the port authority) - Working on a ‘footprint’ bylaw - There is also a 50 meter maximum setback for farmland - Passed a bylaw that allows agriculture in every zone in Richmond - Council has looked at and discussed buying up parcels of land (whom people want to sell and develop) and turning them into linear parks, creating both a buffer, and land area that is available for future farming, if needed. - Successful retention of Garden City Lands
City of Surrey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The very concept of Surrey doing the plan gave a confidence of the commitment of Surrey’s council to agriculture and farmers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is a change in attitudes and a new confidence because of the creation of the plan - There are fields being farmed today that were never farmed before - There is an intrinsic knowledge of the plan in many ways; it is not consulted on a regular basis anymore - Spawned policy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No net loss of agricultural land <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “City of Surrey’s Agricultural Inclusion Policy” - Surrey Public Golf Course was a 2 for 1 trade. - The creation of the AAC - The 300m density buffer (Policy 031). - Storm water drainage policies and upland development

Table 11. Outcomes of agricultural plans ‘received’ by local governments

Municipality/District	Outcomes identified by interviewees
District of Maple Ridge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Now have a local event to promote agriculture - The “Golden Harvest”. - Have provided some support for local initiatives - “Country Fest Fair” - Are looking at a bylaw for beekeeping in urban areas. - AAC provides support for the farmer’s market
Township of Spallumcheen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There have been very little, if any, changes. - No specific examples of results that can be directly attributed to the plan
Regional District of Comox-Strathcona	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The plan was “incredibly energetic” in terms of itemized outcomes. - Another outcome of this AAP has been an increased awareness of the board of directors for the Regional District. - There has since been a “shift” in attitudes in favour of agriculture - Cumulative awareness that has come out of the plan has created a change - The plan was tabled/shelved partly due to a lack of staff support - It was picked up again after the economic development commission realised the potential in development of agriculture - A farming/garden guide was produced - One of the great things that came out of the plan to promote agriculture was a little brochure to let people to know where they can buy food directly from farms. - Significant promotion of the farmer’s market has increased. - Farm tours for politicians. - Food for thought workshop where local bureaucrats are given free lunch while attending a seminar of issues. - Economic development initiative to recruit farmers to the region has evolved out of the “vision” of the plan

awareness of the importance of sustainability has grown out of other externalities, such as pop culture. This has not come as a result of the plan.”

On the other hand, a benefit of agricultural planning is to bring local governments, members of the public, and the agricultural community together to articulate a shared vision for the future of agriculture and the policies necessary to achieve this vision. In this sense, interviewees recognised that agricultural planning, and agriculture itself, contributes to the community as a whole. “Creating the plan worked on relationships, because there were interactions going on as the plan was created.” As other respondents stated, the planning process has “inherent value by building dialogue within the community” and “they are an excuse for people to get together at the table, who wouldn’t ordinarily get together, and build a vision, like what would this look like.” In a similar tone, one person stated, “The real value of the planning process is how it simulates new thinking and changes the behaviour of the people that were engaged in the planning process.” The process was also described as a dialogue with new thinking that leads to “a much better understanding of agricultural issues and much better co-operation and communication.” As stated by one interviewee, “The plan ‘started the ball rolling’” while another noted the completed plan “has a vision for more localised, sustainable, employment-driven agricultural enterprise.” As another interviewee explained, “There is a new mindset of politicians and the community that didn’t exist before.” Another person stated, “Because the plan coincided with the OCP, yes, it has helped to contribute to building more sustainable communities - agriculture was incorporated into other community planning processes.”

The on-going benefit of a plan is that it becomes an active, living document, one that is referred to in development applications that affect or are affected by agriculture are

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looked at in conjunction with the plan. In hindsight, one interviewee commented, “It was difficult at the time, but looking back it was worth the challenge.” Another stated, “You can always have room for improvement, but I think it is pretty good.” In some cases, however, there is disappointment that the plans have not had the impact that was expected. As noted by one interviewee, “The plan itself was a great success. It just wasn’t received well at the political level.”

In addition to asking key informants to identify outcomes associated with the agricultural plans, they were also questions that explored the nature of these outcomes and their relation to the plan and the planning process. The following information is organised based on the questions asked.

Contribution of plans to outcomes

Interviewees were asked to clarify the extent to which the agricultural plans contributed to the outcomes they identified. Overall, there is a strong sense that the plans had a positive influence over the outcomes, but this influence may have been more indirect than direct. As an explanation, interviewees noted the inter-relationships of factors within the agricultural sector and between agriculture and other community-wide factors. The following statements illustrate the range of responses received.

- Decisions are changing as a result of the AAP. Good detail in the plan means that farmers are telling planners how to make changes.
- The plan encourage a link between local providers/growers, and local consumers.
- Local has become a brand in the general consuming consciousness. This objective can’t be completely attributed to the plan, but it is a success.
- Water conservation, water security, and water use are objectives stated in the plan. The plan did facilitate these outcomes, however it is also just because it is there. A lot of the movement on agricultural issues can be attributed to the planner working for the Municipality at the time. Also, a different council, more supportive of agriculture, was voted in which also played a large role to support agriculture.
- The plan has created a process, and a way of dealing with issues (such as propane cannons).

In some areas the agricultural plan has had little impact, according to people interviewed. As one interviewee noted, “Council is weak on implementation. They don’t use the plan enough.” In another area, “Not everybody buys into agricultural plan policies, because of the [poor] viability of farming. Land costs are high, thus rendering farming more of a lifestyle choice than a money-maker.” In one instance, an interviewee noted, “The politicians of the day expected land exclusions as a result of the plan.”

Interviewees were asked to expand on the relationship between the plan and outcomes by identifying other factors that were involved. In Comox, it was the economic development office that saw value in items identified in the plan and moved these items forward. In the Okanagan, broader issues were identified as factors influencing outcomes. An interviewee noted the influence of the wine industry, which has changed the profile of agriculture in the area and brings in more and higher income tourists. As

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well, wealthy people are moving to the area, which changes the demand for and uses of land. Roger Cheetham, Planning Officer with the ALC, helps to put the potential benefits of agricultural plans into a broader context.

Again, it gets back to this overall appreciation of agriculture which has come out of plans. It's more the process as much as the actual measures; the policies that come out of the plans that have been helpful. The process has helped in the communication and education – two-way process that has helped result in better decisions from local governments. Significant changes in some cases... To what extent it was specifically because of the plan I don't know. To a degree, it is the planning, and not the plan. Everything that has happened in the last ten years, globally, has helped to increase the awareness of the importance of agriculture. Therefore it is difficult to attribute outcomes to the plans themselves."

Benefits to local agriculture

Interviewees were also asked to identify how the agricultural plans benefitted the local agricultural sector. Harold Steves from Richmond provides a pragmatic view:

"Basically with the viability strategy what we're doing is we're saying, 'Ok, you're zoned for agriculture, by Richmond, you're in the ALR, and we are going to support you to make your farm more viable.' And that's really what it's all about. We've proven in a number of ways that we have improved the viability of farms in Richmond dramatically."

In the Comox Valley, an interviewee noted the increased level of publicity that was started by the planning process as a benefit to the local agricultural sector. The interviewee also noted the increase in number of farms in the area and an increase in gross farm receipts. This same person stated that because of the plan, "farmers felt important, and understand the importance of what they contribute to the community." This view is consistent with another person who explained that the "agricultural plan helps a broad scale perspective for the support of agriculture."

Identifying direct economic benefits to local farming that were associated with agricultural plans was very elusive. As one person noted, "Impacts on farm income are not necessarily related to the agricultural plan. Agribusiness is not greatly influenced by a plan, but more-so by locational factors such as international trade, etc." The limits of what local governments could do were also noted: "What [local governments] can do in terms of economic viability is providing irrigation and drainage." Others noted the ability of local governments to provide other infrastructure for agriculture, such as farmers markets, which supports agricultural viability at the municipal level and can help to diversify the agricultural sector.

Consistency with provincial policy and legislation

Many interviewees provided clear statements about the benefits of agricultural plans to improve consistency between provincial policy and legislation and local government policies. "The plan provided a good foundation to start." "Yes, clarified roles and responsibilities." "Resulted in an increase in communication." "Everybody knows their role." "There is no question that it does." "Yes, this is a given." "In some respects, yes. The plans have helped to facilitate provincial guidelines, and moving those regulations into local government." "Plans are extremely helpful. They force you to sit down with

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the provincial government and look at local issues and local problems.” An example of enabling consistency is the amendment of appropriate zoning bylaws in one agricultural area to better align the policies with the ALC (e.g., agri-tourism and commercial uses that the ALC permits).

Influence of the plans on agricultural land uses

Positively influencing agricultural land use policy decisions was mentioned frequently by interviewees. The following quotations illustrate the importance of how plans function as a resource that supports policy decision making.

- “It [the plan] also provides language and everything for applications to assist in those incremental land use decisions that support agriculture. The plan is referenced in applications. The plan helps protect agricultural land with supportive language.”
- “There is a focus on the ‘needs’ of agriculture in the plans. Farmers have to point to the plan to remind politicians at times, but the plan is there.”
- “[The plan] has provided the knowledge and background for politicians to stand firm on boundaries. In the past, politicians come in with visions...Because of this plan and the unified voice of the farming community, a lot of politicians changed their tune. A shift in attitude. The plan enabled this knowledge.”
- “The document outlines historical uses of the land. This is valuable in providing background information for justification of suggestions included in staff reports. It provides broad based policy statements [and refers to] key pieces of land.”
- “Overall, it is not specifically what is in the area agriculture plan, as it is that it has drawn attention to agriculture and it has provided a mechanism for communication between the agriculture sector and the decision makers, which has been very helpful to build an understanding relationship that has benefited agriculture on an overall basis.”
- “The plan has enabled council. Not all land belongs in the ALR. Now communities understand which areas they want to preserve, and which areas they don’t care about.”

Benefits of reducing urban/rural conflict

Benefits of agricultural plans for reducing urban/rural conflict were noted, however, the benefits were not always direct or apparent. The most obvious direct benefit noted by many interviewees is of plans to influence the adoption of urban buffer policies. A frequently identified indirect benefit generated by the agricultural plans was a greater level of awareness among the public for agricultural issues. One person noted that better provincial guidelines for developing buffers are needed.

The planning process

Key informants were asked a set of questions related to the effectiveness of the planning process. The aim was to gather information about what worked well, what did not work

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well, and how might the process have been done differently. Already noted above were the general benefits of the agricultural planning process for helping to give a voice to the agricultural sector and to build a shared vision of agriculture in the area.

What elements of the process used to create the AAP worked well?

A number of general principles were identified as elements that contributed positively to the planning process. These included a high level of commitment to completing the plan and establishing the steering committee at the very beginning of the process with a clear mandate and defined end goals.

Public and farmer participation

Communication and participation were identified as key elements to successful planning projects. “The more people communicate about issues, the better their understanding becomes, while support for issues increases.” Having a group of farmers who were knowledgeable, active in farming, and willing to take the time to participate in the process was also identified as a factor that contributed to positive outcomes. Broad representation of farmers on the committee was often mentioned. Each commodity group “has different issues, and some of those are conflicting with others. Bringing them all together is a must.” In one case it was noted that “more and more farmers came on board once they realised the city was actually doing something.” The public must also be provided an opportunity to be involved. Methods used during the planning processes were varied. These included mail-out questionnaires, open houses, and hosting lunch meetings for the public and farmers.

Land use inventories

Land use inventories were identified by more than one interviewee as very important elements of the planning process, particularly when completed at the outset of or prior to the planning process. “You’ve just got to know where the farms are, where the big ones are, the small ones, the threats of urban encroachment, industrial expansions, those sorts of things. They all show up on the maps.” Another interviewee explained that the land use inventory “provided a clear picture of how much farmland there was and how much was actually used.” Likewise, mapping was identified as one of the most important parts of the planning process. The matter of small-lot agriculture was provided as an example that illustrates the benefits of mapping. These lots are often over-looked in area planning but represent significant opportunities for agricultural productivity. As noted in Richmond, “In 1973, we produced 86% of our vegetables and small fruit, now it is 43%. The farmland in Richmond was responsible for a large part of that, composed of intensive small farm parcels managed by European farmers. All that land was built on “

Consultant

With only minor exceptions, key informants expressed gratitude for the work completed by hired consultants. The general view is that consultants are necessary. “Who, otherwise, will create the document? Who has the time, capacity, and knowledge to do it properly?” As another interviewee stated, “a good consultant figures out what is going to happen and puts that in the plan so that it will happen!” There were a few words of caution expressed. “You can’t just bring in anybody to write the plan: The consultant

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needs to fit in.” Another person stated, “The consultant needs to do what the AAC directs, not what the consultant wants.” As well, it was noted by one person that sometimes the consultant is not the best person to engage with the farming community.

What elements of the process used to create the AAP did not work well?

The parts of the planning process that did not work well for many areas were increasing the level of public participation and farmer involvement. Among farmers, getting them on board from the outset is difficult. “The only negative thing was getting buy-in from the farmers at the beginning. There was a bit of skepticism; farmers are skeptical of all levels of government. Got the Farmer’s Institute onside. Large scale farmers were skeptical.” In more than one case the larger producers were more difficult to engage. “We thought that maybe the big players didn’t come out because they’re busy farming. They sort out the issues by themselves and don’t have time or patience to put into the planning process.” Yet, “If the farmers aren’t there, their issues aren’t heard.” In Comox Valley it took “a number of years” to get support from the area’s farmers.

Key informants also recognised that open house meetings can be of limited value. Open houses tend to be “preaching to the converted.” As well, when farmers are present, concern about “stacking” public meetings was mentioned by one interviewee.

Continuity throughout the process was also identified as creating challenges for the planning process. “The biggest problem was a change in council - it felt like having the rug pulled out from under us. What can you do about that? Nothing?” Another noted, “The context for which the plan is operating has changed. Many of the programs, funding possibilities, and people that were available in 2001 when the plan was created, are gone.”

Trying to reach consensus on sensitive issues also created problems. “Attempts to solve problems often generate conflict, resulting in broad-based plans, ‘mother-hood’ statements that don’t really solve problems.” The interviewee continued, “Perhaps another reason for broad statements is that time is not available to work through problem issues. The process should not be rushed.”

What elements of the process could have been improved?

The key informants did not have many suggestions for improving the planning process, as evident in the following.

- “When the plan was created, it was viewed by the farming community that it was a ‘one and only chance, thus a lot (everything!) was put into the plan. In retrospect, it would have been better to only include items that could be changed, or that stakeholders had a hand in.”
- “In the future acknowledge issues that affect agriculture, but focus the plan on the kind of activities and issues that stakeholders have control over”
- “Was possibly too many resources spent on analyzing issues. Creates an expectation that can’t be achieved.”
- “First Nations should have been more actively involved.”

Given the importance of land use inventories to the planning process, interviewees also identified the need for local governments to be better informed in how they can be used in the agricultural planning process. It was also suggested that

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inventories be reviewed at least every five years. But caution was also expressed about the amount of time is needed for mapping.

Agriculture Advisory Committees

As noted above, AACs make important contributions to the governance of agricultural lands. As one interviewee emphasised, “An agricultural plan without an AAC can be useless. The AAC is essential.” It was also emphasised in the interviews that the AAC should be a committee of council with a councilor sitting as a member of the committee. As explained, this arrangement is stronger than a committee of the planning department and therefore council is more likely to listen to what the committee has to say. It was also noted that members of AACs may change less often than members of councils, which helps to provide continuity. Interviewees also mentioned the need to have representation from as many commodity groups as possible within the AAC, large and small operations included. For many projects an AAC existed prior to the start of the planning process while in several other cases an AAC was established for the purpose of creating the agricultural plan.

What role did the AAC play after the plan was developed?

As illustrated in Table 6 (above) all but two AACs remained active after the plan was completed. Among active AACs the primary role is to review applications to the ALC. In some cases this is the only role of the AAC, but in most cases the AAC continues to be a “sounding board” for local governments to help review regulations and provide input. “Items are referred to them. They come up with practical ways to implement things. Because they are farmers, they are focused on what farmers need.” In Richmond, “Anything to do with agriculture we refer to the AAC. It has become an integral part of planning.” In this role, having a dedicated staff liaison with the AAC is crucial to its functioning as this creates a stronger link between the AAC and local government. Given the membership of the AAC, it also continues to provide an important link between the municipal government and the agriculture sector.

The active AACs also help to provide a link between the agricultural plan and the ALC. “Commissioners look very strongly at recommendations that come from AACs. They assume that these recommendations come out of AAPs.”

One of the three inactive AACs is in the District of Summerland. In this area, two members from the original AAC now sit on the District’s Advisory Planning Committee, which hears every planning and agricultural related issue. It was explained that this works better in Summerland than an AAC. “There is a mixture of people on the committee; the committee hears both sides of every story.” This helps create balanced results with more political support. Another inactive AAC is in the City of Salmon Arm. According to the person interviewed, the City does not feel it is necessary to have an AAC at this point. The Spallumcheen AAC, although it was considered active within that area, has not convened for approximately two years.

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Role of AAC in implementing the plan

There are different levels of involvement by AACs in the implementation of the plan. However, as described above, the AAC role is primarily an advisory body. The specific role of the AAC in relation to implementation depends on the nature of the plan itself. Implementation of the plan may mean outreach and communications or bylaw development and ALC application reviews. The more important function of AACs appears to be advisory as the plan's recommended bylaws and regulations are developed.

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There is widespread agreement among key informants that funding is critical to complete agricultural plans. To get local governments on board, the planning process must be affordable. "Funding is the big carrot to get it done, without that it probably wouldn't happen in most cases." In this regard, the IAF IGAP program "is critical" to agricultural planning in BC.

The primary use of funding was to hire a consultant. As explained by one interviewee, "A critical requirement of to the success of AAPs is funding for a consultant to act as a facilitator and project coordinator." Other suggested uses of funds are public promotion, administration, implementation, and monitoring.

When asked how funding might be used more effectively to develop future AAPs, key informants offered a few suggestions. Most of these suggestions centred on support for implementation. Some interviewees were concerned that no funding is available for implementation. Others expressed concern that no funding was reserved in the budget for implementation. One suggestion was to use IAF LGAP funding as a "carrot" by withholding funds for implementation after the completed plans are submitted. It was suggested that IAF make it clearer that there may be funding available for implementing specific recommendations.

DISCUSSION

Planning for agriculture in BC is relatively new and does not have the history that general land use plans have. As well, the diversity of the agricultural land base across the province and of agricultural operations both contribute to a wide range of agricultural issues. Both factors contribute to the range of the goals, contents, and outcomes among the completed agricultural plans. While reflecting upon the diversity of the plans it became apparent to the researchers that the inconsistent use of the terms 'agricultural plans' and 'agricultural area plans' was of particular importance. From the project's perspective, the inconsistent use of the two terms among plans affects the ability to evaluate the LGAP program as a whole. Therefore, the use of the two terms provides a key point of focus for the following discussion about the efficacy and effectiveness of the LGAP program.

Efficacy: Intended outcomes of the LGAP program

The interviews with the people who have influenced the development and delivery of the LGAP program helped to clarify the program's intended outcomes. The general aim is to develop practical solutions that support the viability of agriculture. It was recognised also that these practical solutions should be reflected in formal agricultural land use policies that influence local government decisions. These points are expressed clearly in IAF's promotional materials for the LGAP program. The eligible activities are consistent with these intended outcomes. Overall, the information provides good direction to potential applicants. There are, however, two concerns that introduce ambiguity.

Agricultural Area Plans

As noted, one of the concerns is the use of the terms 'agricultural plan' and 'agricultural area plan.' The *Helping Communities Plan for an Agricultural Future* brochure is focussed on developing Agricultural Area Plans. There is no clear statement that explains an AAP; neither is there an explicit reference to AAPs being sub-area plans of community plans, although the relation to bylaws and policies is mentioned. It is reasonable to assume that people not familiar with Agricultural Area Plans – which includes most people, including farmers and professional land use planners – would not understand the formal aspects of an AAP.

Potential applicants who do not know what an AAP is might look for additional information. A possible first step is to review the plans mentioned in the IAF LGAP brochure. What a person will find is that the information provided infers that an AAP is synonymous with an agricultural plan. As stated on the brochure, "The Township of Spallumcheen (2006), the District of Lake Country (2008) and the District of Summerland (2008) have agricultural area plans in place." The brochure also mentions Rural Oliver and Salt Spring Island Trust in the same context. Of these five local governments, only one (Summerland) has adopted the agricultural plan as a secondary plan (i.e., AAP) of its OCP.

The ambiguity of the term Agricultural Area Plan is compounded by the difficulty of finding additional information. The IAF brochure provides a link to the Ministry of Agriculture's webpage on the *Strengthening Farming* program. From here the reader must navigate two more pages to find a description of AAPs. At the bottom of this page is a link to additional resources for agricultural planning. Scrolling down this page one can find a link to the ALC's *Planning for Agriculture*.

Formally adopt

A related issue is the stated expectation of the LGAP program is that AAPs be "formally adopted" by local governments. As explained above, the term 'adopted' may not have specific meaning and can be used differently by different governments.²⁰ By accepting the local governments named in the LGAP brochure as examples of what it means for a

²⁰ According to *Roberts Rules of Order*, the terms 'accept' and 'adopt' can be used in regard to receiving reports. A report is 'accepted' when there are no actions to be taken, i.e., the report is for information only. Otherwise the term 'adopt' is used.

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plan to be formally adopted, an evaluator might assume that a motion to receive an agricultural plan satisfies the expected outcome of the funding program, but this is not consistent with the use of the term Agricultural Area Plan.

Implications

These two areas of ambiguity generate questions about the stated expected outcome of the LGAP program. From an evaluator's perspective, it is not clear the extent to which a funded project would be considered effective if the expected outcome of formally adopting an AAP was not satisfied. Likewise, it is not clear if a project meets the expected outcome if an agricultural plan was received by council (or board) motion but not as a secondary plan or incorporated into land use policies. If the interpretation of the expected outcome of the LGAP program is to develop solutions that guide local government decisions and address current issues that area farmers are dealing with then all of the completed plans are successful. In contrast, if the expected outcome of the LGAP program is to formally adopt AAPs then not all of the completed plans are successful.

Based on information collected during the interviews with people associated with the LGAP program, there is a clear opportunity within IAF to discuss the expected outcomes of the LGAP program. Central to the discussion can be whether or not, or the extent to which, local agricultural planning efforts should focus on land use policies and regulations. Perhaps the statement of the expected outcome of the funding program has been carried forward from the start of the funding program but without due consideration in recent years. The emphasis on the formal adoption of an AAP appears to be consistent with the views expressed in the ALC's *Planning for Agriculture* resources. However, it also appears that either the commitment to this outcome has diminished over time or the technical implications of adopting an AAP have been overlooked. Related to the debate about the focus on land use policy is whether or not including the formal adoption of an AAP as a possible outcome of the LGAP program infers that IAF will be politicising the content of the documents.

The researchers believe that IAF should continue to support the formal adoption of AAPs by local governments as secondary plans as one of a range of possible outcomes of agricultural planning efforts. It is our view that (a) a key to a viable agricultural sector is ensuring that agriculture is recognised as the highest and best use of agricultural land; (b) the best way to recognise agriculture and the highest and best use is through formal land use policies and regulations; and (c) local agricultural planning solutions that focus on formal land use policies and regulations strengthens the relation between the LGAP program and the Province's *Strengthening Farming* program. The latter encourages developing policies to be included in Official Community Plans (OCPs) aimed at maintaining and enhancing farming, designating Development Permit Areas (DPAs) for the protection of farming within OCPs to improve compatibility, and adopting agricultural area plans in key farming communities. On these points, the researchers agree with the argument Smith presents in *Planning for Agriculture*, that planning for agriculture through the use of a sub-area Agricultural Area Plan has the greatest potential to ensure a sufficient level of detail, provide the context within which to judge competing land use activities in farm areas, and to avoid agriculture being overwhelmed by urban planning issues.

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IAF's support of formally adopting AAPs by local governments as secondary plans does not have to be a requirement for funding; rather, the support can be stated as one possible outcome. In simplified terms, there are at least three possible outcomes of agricultural planning processes: (i) a completed agricultural plan, (ii) recommendations to revise existing or adopt new land use policies and regulations, and (iii) recommendation to formally adopt an Agricultural Area Plan as a secondary plan. As well, different tools, e.g., land use inventories, can be used to support the planning process. It may be possible to develop funding options that correspond with a step-wise process that moves agricultural planning efforts from general planning towards recommendations to local governments, including typical steps to implement the outcomes (refer to Appendix C for a brief outline of what these steps might be).

Effectiveness: Outcomes of the funding

In the context of the LGAP's intention to support agricultural planning as a means to find solutions that improve the viability of farming in the area, it is clear that the funding program is effective. There is a high level of satisfaction regarding the plans created by the planning processes, the benefits of having these plans, and of the funding provided by IAF through the LGAP program. In particular, many people interviewed noted the critical importance of the program funding as essential to getting the planning efforts off the ground, gaining buy-in from local governments, and increasing awareness among the public for a shared vision of agriculture in their area.

Some concerns about the LGAP were expressed by applicants. These concerns centred on a perceived lack of on-going support and expertise once the planning efforts began. Concerns were also expressed about the lack of follow-up to help implement the plans (many applicants were not aware of possible implementation funding). However, relative to the positive outcomes of the projects these concerns were less significant.

The following discussion will focus on questions about effectiveness that arise in the context of the ambiguities described above. These questions are related to the appropriate scope of agricultural plans and the level of understanding about agricultural planning. A list of general factors that contributed to planning processes concludes the discussion.

Scope of plans

There were many questions among key informants about the appropriate scope of agricultural planning. Should it focus on broad generalities or specifics? Should it focus on policy or action? On economic development or land use planning? Long term or short term? With regard for whether one is developing a plan or a strategy, one interviewee stated, "There probably should be a distinction between the two, but not sure what it is at this point. The difference, if there is intended to be one, is not being recognised." Another stated, "There are different types of plans: plans about food versus plans about agriculture. Many are created simply because there are funds available." It appears that some of the frustrations expressed by interviewees about the effectiveness of the agricultural plans are related to mis-placed expectations. For example, if a person expected a plan of action they will be disappointed if efforts are directed at developing

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policies. More critically, one person questioned whether IAF knows what it wants to achieve and wondered if local governments know what to get out of it. “Agricultural plans encourage local governments to think about agriculture in a local and economic perspective. However, few guidelines are given to this. IAF needs to have a clearer set of objectives...and be clearer about what they would like to see.”

Some of these questions about the scope of agricultural planning can be resolved within projects by stating more clearly the different purposes of agricultural plans and Agricultural Area Plans. Agricultural plans and Agriculture Area Plans are – or should be – regarded as two distinct types of plans. While an agricultural plan can be broad and be directed toward a range of issues, an AAP is focussed on providing direction to a local government to develop and implement land use policies. Aligning a project’s goals and objectives more clearly with either agricultural plans or AAPs can help to create two stronger planning tools. The opportunity is to use ‘agricultural planning’ as a general term that can readily accommodate a wider range of issues, including a stronger focus on economic development and food security issues. This creates the space needed to use ‘agricultural area plan’ more precisely and consistently in the context of land use policy to refer only to area plans adopted as secondary plans of OCPs. In turn, a more precise use of the two terms helps to accommodate the priorities of the *Strengthening Farming* program within planning processes, as each tool provides different means to integrate provincial interests with local interests and provincial legislation with local policies.

By conflating the two terms IAF may be contributing to confusion about the intended outcomes of agricultural planning processes, potentially leading to plans that are too broad in both objectives and scope to be successfully implemented in their entirety. On the other hand, more clearly distinguishing between ‘agricultural plan’ and ‘agricultural area plan’ can help to clarify the possible scope of plans, thereby leading to more effective use of IAF funding. In the same context, the scope of pre-plans, such as agricultural strategies, and their relation to agricultural plans can also be more clearly stated.

Level of understanding

The relatively new field of agricultural planning presents challenges not only to lay people but to all involved. The primary source of information about agricultural planning appears to reside within the Ministry of Agriculture and the Agriculture Land Commission. Professional planners working for local governments have received little or no formal education in agricultural planning, although the ALC has provided professional development workshops and post-secondary curricula are incorporating more agricultural planning topics and lessons. For these reasons the researchers expected to hear from key informants that they did not know enough about the planning process to make the best use of available resources. As one person stated, “There was no experience in building plans. No one had any idea of how to go about it. This could potentially have been averted if better direction had been given.” Also, agrologists may not know enough about land use planning. One person commented, “it may be easier to teach a planner a little bit about agriculture than it is to teach an agrologist about planning.” Another element of understanding what planning is about, or lack thereof, concerns farmers. “Big farmers are leery towards planning. They ask the question, ‘Does agricultural planning mean more regulations?’” In addition to a technical understanding of agricultural land use planning there is also a need to educate non-farmers about farming. “There is a big

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difference between awareness of the importance of the farm, and recognition of what farming actually is. That is a huge gap.”

Understanding the breadth of issues and solutions presents a formidable challenge for agricultural planning. Everyone involved in the planning process could benefit from better education and communication processes. For this reason, several interviewees suggested that IAF funding could be used for this purpose. For example, one person stated that because “Most municipal staff do not have a background in agriculture, IAF could make better use of funding if they mentored municipalities in the creation of the agricultural plans.” The same person also suggested building of resources, providing a guide, and facilitating relationships with other municipalities. Another suggested providing a framework to help guide the planning processes.

Providing more information about agricultural planning, and about Agricultural Area Plans in particular, to applicants will help improve the LGAP program’s effectiveness. There are excellent resources available but they do not appear to be used well. As noted above, the ALC’s *Planning for Agriculture: Resource Materials* is essential reading. There are opportunities for IAF to work with the Ministry of Agriculture, the ALC, and other agencies to improve the breadth of resources available to support agricultural planning and to ensure that resources are clearly communicated, up-to-date, and easily accessible.

Interviewees recognised that the responsibility for agricultural planning does not rest solely in the hands of IAF. The Ministry of Agriculture and ALC also play a role. Communication among the Ministry, ALC, and IAF “is an important aspect of ensuring that the funding money is well spent.”

General factors that worked well in the planning process

The following points were identified by interviewees as factors that worked well for the projects with which they were involved. An attempt is made to keep the observations general such that they are more likely to apply under different circumstances.

- **Local plans for local issues**
The value of a plan is increased when it can precisely identify and respond to local issues. Precisely stated issues help generate local ownership for the solutions.
- **Public support**
Broad public input is important for three reasons. First, the agricultural planning process is an important vehicle to increase public awareness of the importance of agriculture and of the issues that farmers face. Second, the level of public input to the planning process will influence the perceived level of credibility of the plan among members of the local government. Third, because agriculture is closely connected to other aspects of health and well-being, no one group can make a plan work. Notwithstanding these benefits, the ability to generate this support requires resources to complete, but these resources may be better directed elsewhere.

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- **Build bridges between farming and politics**
The success of any process depends on who is involved. Getting broad representation from the farming community is essential. The process also needs to have people involved who believe that agriculture is important, especially as an economic driver. As one interviewee explained, “These plans will never, ever, take off if there is only political support for them. It will not happen. And they won’t take off if there is only farm support. The key to success of the creation of plans is that you have to have ‘bridge-builders’ between the political and farming communities.”
- **Resources**
Given the inherent limitations of resources, it is important to consider the feasibility of each recommendation. A plan needs to realistically reflect the resources available to turn recommendations into policies and actions.
- **Implementation**
Many interviewees focussed on the importance of implementation. In some cases not enough attention was paid to this aspect of the planning process. A detailed implementation plan that identifies who is to execute the plan must be included as part of the planning process. To be successfully implemented a plan must be supported by the local government. Ideally there is an administrator who has specific responsibility for agricultural planning. The AAC can play a critical governance role to ensure policies are applied appropriately to local government decisions. The responsibility for implementing recommendations of Agricultural Area Plans should fall within the authority of local governments.
- **Timing in relation to OCP**
The optimum time to develop an AAP is when the planning process can be most easily incorporated into broader planning issues. This means that a good time to develop an AAP is prior to or in conjunction with an OCP review. When the two processes are completed around the same time then the steering committee for the AAP can provide input to the OCP review. (Note: IAF currently states that plan updates be completed within 36 months after an OCP has been updated and approved or when conditions have changed substantially.)
- **Continuity**
Issues will arise for lack of continuity. Volunteers, staff, politicians, programs, and conditions change over time. Managing (but not dictating) the membership of AACs provides the most direct means to increase the level of continuity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Agricultural planning in BC has moved through two phases. The first focussed on land preservation and the second on agricultural land use planning – making sure agriculture was recognised as the highest and best use of agricultural land. Throughout this second phase IAF’s *Local Government Agricultural Planning* funding program has been instrumental. Now, after supporting agricultural land use planning for more than ten years, IAF has an opportunity to improve how it delivers the LGAP program.

The aim of this project was to evaluate what has been accomplished by and as a result of the funding program. The broad objective was to improve the development of future agricultural plans in order to strengthen municipal planning processes and protect the importance of agriculture to communities. Based on the program evaluation, the researchers have only one area of concern: the lack of clarity about the expected outcomes of the LGAP program. By addressing this concern, the researchers believe that IAF can improve the LGAP funding program and, in turn, improve the development of future agricultural plans in order to strengthen municipal planning processes and protect the importance of agriculture to communities. We believe that the concern about the lack of clarity about the expected outcomes of the LGAP program can be addressed through the following recommendations. We also provide suggestions for further consideration.

1.0 Clarify the expected outcomes of the LGAP program

- 1.1 Determine whether the current statement about the overarching expected outcome is consistent with the priorities of the LGAP program;
- 1.2 Clearly distinguish between an agricultural plan as a general undertaking and an Agricultural Area Plan as a formal policy tool used by local governments. Use these terms more precisely and consistently in all of IAF information materials about agricultural planning.
 - 1.2.1 Provide information about the purpose of an AAP.
 - 1.2.2 Clarify use of the term ‘strategy’ (versus plan and AAP).
- 1.3 Clarify the term ‘formally adopt’ (versus receive, accept, endorse, etc).
- 1.4 Revise IAF promotional materials to reflect changes.

2.0 Develop funding options based on the expected outcomes of agricultural planning processes.

- 2.1 Align expected project outcomes with different stages, and associated activities that are eligible for funding, of the planning process.

In addition to these recommendations, the following points are presented as suggestions for IAF’s consideration.

Develop additional requirements for LGAP funding eligibility.

- Require an AAC to be in place and operating before applying for funding. The LGAP pamphlet presently states [emphasis added], “IAF *expects* applicants to

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have a steering committee (Agricultural Advisory Committee) in place at the time of application.” Perhaps clearer language is required if having an AAC in place is already a requirement.

- Require land use inventories be included in or completed as part of the planning process (not just listed as an eligible activity). These inventories provide essential information for creating effective plans.
- Require applicants to state whether or not the goal is to recommend revisions to or adoption of agricultural land use policies. If this goal is not known at the time of application then the applicants could state when in the planning process the decision to include this goal or not will be made. This requirement is suggested as a means to encourage applicants to have clear goals and objectives. This requirement is not intended as a criterion of evaluation; IAF can be neutral with regard to these specific goals of the applicant, but can require applicants to have clear goals and objectives.
- If the goal is to have land use policies revised or formally adopted then IAF should require applicants to make a decision as to whether an AAP is appropriate or not for their agricultural area. If this decision is not known at the time of the application then the applicants could state when in the planning process the decision will be made. This requirement, like the previous, is suggested as a means to encourage applicants to have clear goals and objectives. This requirement is not intended as a criterion of evaluation; IAF can be neutral with regard to these specific goals of the applicant, but can require applicants to have clear goals and objectives.
- Restrict recommendations for agricultural land use policies (but not agricultural plans) to issues within the legislative control of local governments.

Provide a resource kit about agricultural planning to applicants.

- Develop a set of ‘best of’ agricultural planning practices and outcomes based on the successes of the LGAP program.
- Encourage the Ministry of Agriculture and the Agricultural Land Commission to improve resources to support agricultural planning, such as:
 - Update Smith’s (1998) *Planning for Agriculture: Resource Materials* to reflect current legislation.
 - Encourage the Ministry of Agriculture and the Agricultural Land Commission to deliver more professional development workshops to agrologists and local government planners on agricultural planning.
- As resources permit, provide more mentoring and advice throughout the planning process. (This may be provided better by the Ministry of Agriculture or the ALC.)

Encourage the updating of agricultural plans and AAPs to keep plans current (e.g., every five years).

APPENDICES

The following appendices were attached to the final report as electronic files.

A. Interview guides

1. Key informant interviews
2. LGAP ‘founders and shapers’

B. Summaries of completed agricultural plans

1. Regional District of Okanangan-Similkameen (Electoral Area C - Rural Oliver, Oliver)
2. Corporation of Township of Spallumcheen
3. Regional District of Central Okanagan
4. District of Summerland
5. City of Salmon Arm
6. Regional District of Comox-Strathcona
7. District Municipality of North Cowichan
8. City of Richmond
9. City of Surrey

C. Suggested step-wise agricultural planning process